



Desert Vision: Climate Change, Colonialism, and the Transformation of Artistic Creativity in Northwestern Kenya, 1926-1963

Citation

Tervala, Kevin Dixon. 2020. Desert Vision: Climate Change, Colonialism, and the Transformation of Artistic Creativity in Northwestern Kenya, 1926-1963. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences.

Permanent link

<https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37365121>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

Desert Vision: Climate Change, Colonialism, and the Transformation of Artistic Creativity in
Northwestern Kenya, 1926-1963

A dissertation presented
by
Kevin Dixon Tervalá
to
The Department of African and African American Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
In the subject of
African Studies

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts
September 2019

© Kevin Dixon Tervalva
All rights reserved.

Desert Vision: Climate Change, Colonialism, and the Transformation of Artistic Creativity in Northwestern Kenya, 1926-1963

Abstract

This dissertation examines the ways that climate change and British colonization transformed the artistic production of northwestern Kenya during the late colonial period. Focusing its attention on a series of novel, innovative, and somewhat aberrant artworks—objects that in some way deviated from long-established formal structures—it contends that the unique formal properties of these works were brought about by the region’s increasingly unstable climate and the policies of the British colonial administration. By rewriting the scripts of social life in which certain object types were embedded, these twin irruptions fundamentally altered the aesthetics of the region, creating a series of new and hybrid forms. As such, it becomes possible to periodize the aesthetics of northwestern Kenya, differentiating between those objects created prior to British effective occupation in 1926 and those created afterwards.

Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Copyright	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgements	v
List of Illustrations	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter One Refugee Aesthetics: Art and Objecthood in an Age of Precarity.....	27
Chapter Two When Nomads Settle: Disaster and Desire on Lake Rudolf (Turkana).....	54
Chapter Three Rowland Baker-Beall and the Empathetic Landscape: Photography and Colonial Policy in the 1930s.....	74
Conclusion The Coming Drought.....	112
Illustrations	118
Bibliography	156

Acknowledgements

“A person is a person through other persons.” I read this nugget of African philosophy at some point in my undergraduate career and it seems particularly appropriate for this moment.

Conceptualizing, researching, and writing this dissertation has spanned the better part of my twenties, and, in a very real way, the people who have intersected with this project are those who have helped shape me into the person I am today. These acknowledgements—brief though they are—are hopefully some indication of both my many debts and my deeply felt gratitude for the remarkable people who made this project possible.

First among equals is my advisor, Suzanne Preston Blier. Since 2012, Suzanne has never stopped teaching me, challenging me, over-caffeinating me, and making me howl with laughter. She is everything a professor should be—bold, rigorous, generous, funny—and if I am a quarter of the scholar she is I will have exceeded my wildest dreams. The other members of my dissertation committee are equally deserving of the world. I met George Paul Meiu on my very first day as a graduate student and I will never stop thanking my lucky stars that Harvard had the good sense to hire him. As a fellow eastern Africanist and art collector, he has been a model mentor and his generous, rigorous engagement with my research has made the project better by miles. Despite living over a thousand miles away, Steven Nelson was a constant presence in my graduate school career and I count myself lucky to have benefited from his insights, humor, patience, and prodding.

When the Evelyn Higginbotham called to tell me I had been admitted to Harvard’s African Studies Ph.D. program I almost immediately blacked out. I have no memory of what she said after those fateful words, and I cannot be certain I didn’t respond with anything other than

screams and guttural utterances. And while I regained my ability to speak upon matriculating, I never lost that initial feeling of excitement and awe—for the university and for the Departments of African and African American Studies and History of Art and Architecture. They really do live up to the hype and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Kathleen Cloutier, Leanne Chaves, Deanna Dalrymple, and Faton Limani for their kindness and their assistance in navigating the logistical complexities of the university.

In seminars and workshops, Jean Comaroff, John L. Comaroff, Caroline Elkins, and John Mugane taught what it meant to be an Africanist and transformed me into the thinker that I am today. And in classrooms, meeting rooms, restaurants, and bars, my fellow graduate students—Layla Bermeo, Kyrah Daniels, Jessica Dickson, Mark Duerksen, Sarah Lockwood, Erin Mosely, Warrick Moses, Anna Neumann, Nicholas Paskert, Ayodeji Ogunnaike, Theresa Sims, Jason Warner, Jessica Williams, and Funlayo Wood—inspired me with their passion, ideas, and drive. I am also immensely grateful to Carrie Lambert-Beatty and Cynthia Becker, who generously let me parachute into art history seminars on both sides of the Charles River and were even kind enough to take on additional advising and examination duties.

Between 2016 and 2017, I told curious friends and family members that I was keeping busy “measuring bowls.” And, in large part, that was true. Over the course of researching this project I was lucky enough to examine 672 Turkana-made artworks and I have never stopped being grateful for that privilege. This was only possible because of the amazing work, most notably: Jacklyn Lacey at the American Museum of Natural History, Shannen Hill and Talia Lieber at the Baltimore Museum of Art, Dawn Scher Thomae at the Milwaukee Public Museum, Mary Jo Arnoldi and Barbara Watanabe at the National Museum of Natural History.

In spite of my love for museum galleries and storage vaults, truly nothing compares to the archives. They are the most magical places on earth and the people who work in them are among the best in society. Richard Ambani at the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service is a national treasure and I still do not know how he managed to find the lost and missing files I so desperately needed. Thanks also go to Caitlin Haynes, Daisy Njoku, and Pam Winkle at the National Anthropological Archives and Human Studies Film Archives and Rebecca Morgan and Mai Reitmeyer at the Rare Books Study Room of the American Museum of Natural History.

I left Cambridge in October 2015, bound for an eight-month job at The Baltimore Museum of Art. Little did I know that, four years later, I would still be there. It is a remarkable place, an institution overflowing with both remarkable works of art and inspiring, supportive people and I still sometimes cannot believe that I work there. I am immensely grateful to my Director, Christopher Bedford, and four successive Chief Curators—Jay Fisher, Rena Hoisington, Katy Rothkopf, and Asma Naeem—for both their willingness to take a chance on me and their hearty and wholehearted support of this project. I am equally gratefully to my brilliant colleagues Virginia Anderson, Andaleeb Banta, Verónica Betancourt, Leslie Cozzi, Liz Courtemanche, Gamynne Guillotte, Frances Klapthor, Talia Lieber, Melanie Harwood, Kristen Hileman, Shannen Hill, Oliver Shell, Darienne Turner, Christopher Wayner, Cecilia Wichmann.

A person's friends are among the most important people in one's life, and I do not know what I would have done over the course of these past four years without Ben Ackerman, Matt Arnstine, Barbara Beidler, Layla Bermeo, Verónica Betancourt, Mark Duerksen, Kyle Gipson, Sarah Horvitz, Chelsea King, Jennifer Kingsley, Melissa Kline, Amanda Lehning, Aliza Leventhal,

Sarah Lockwood, Anna Neumann, Ben Richards, Rob Riker, Alex Snow, Erinn Thompson,
Christopher Wayner, Cecilia Wichmann, Jessica Williams,

The foolhardiness that led me to pursue a PhD in African art history can be blamed on my family, whose passion for education (and over education) stands out as one of their most wonderful qualities. My mother, Debra, and father, Victor, have done more to nurture a love of learning and a passionate commitment to knowledge than anyone else in my life and I dedicate this document to them. They were my first teachers and among the brightest and most loving people I know. I am also so thankful to have my sister and brother, Julie and Justin, in my life. They have proved to be a fount of unending enthusiasm, love, and support over the course of this long and arduous process.

Nick Rego entered my life in 2017 and changed it completely. Finishing this dissertation—like so many things in my life—was only possible because of him. I owe him everything.

List of Illustrations

Figure 0.1: Unidentified artist; Unmarried Girl's Necklace; pre-1960s; Turkana region, Kenya; Hide, string, glass beads; The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1994.278.

Figure 1.1: Unidentified artist; Shield (*Aupwel*) (Front); pre-1912; Turkana region, Kenya; Leather, metal, wood; University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, AF2888

Figure 1.2: Unidentified artist; Shield (*Aupwel*) (Front); pre-1960s; Turkana region, Kenya; Leather, wood; Gift of Nancy and Robert H. Nooter, The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1994.272.

Figure 1.3: Unidentified artist; Shield (*Aupwel*) (Back); pre-1912; Turkana region, Kenya; Leather, metal, wood; University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, AF2888.

Figure 1.4: A. Mielichhofer; *Three Turkana Men*; 1888; Etching; Reproduced in Ludwig von Höhnel, *Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie: A Narrative of Samuel Teleki's Exploring and Hunting Expedition in Eastern Equatorial Africa in 1887 & 1888*. Volume II, 1894.

Figure 1.5: Unidentified artist; Shield (*Aupwel*) (Back); pre-1960s; Turkana region, Kenya; Leather, wood; Gift of Nancy and Robert H. Nooter, The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1994.272.

Figure 1.6: Unidentified artist; Bowl (*Atubwa*); late 19th-early 20th century; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986.478.21.

Figure 1.7: Unidentified artist; Bowl (*Atubwa*); mid- 20th century; Wood, hide; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999.46.113.

Figure 1.8: Unidentified artist; Milk Container (*Akarum*); pre-1929; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide; Milwaukee Public Museum, 36839/9486

Figure 1.9: Unidentified artist; Milk Container (*Akarum*); pre-1968; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide; National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, E433108

Figure 1.10: Unidentified artist; Fat Container (*Eburi*); pre-1929; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide, leather; Milwaukee Public Museum, 61612/22548

Figure 1.11: Unidentified artist; Fat Container (*Eburi*); pre-1947; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide, leather; American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8378 AB

Figure 1.12: Unidentified artist; Fat Container (*Eburi*); pre-1929; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide, leather; Milwaukee Public Museum, 61613/22548

Figure 1.13: Unidentified artist; Fat Container (*Eburi*); pre-1947; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide, leather; American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8379 AB

Figure 1.14: Unidentified artist; Fat Container (*Eburi*); pre-1968; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide, leather; National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution E433084-0

Figure 1.15: Unidentified artist; Fat Container (*Eburi*); pre-1929; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide, leather; Milwaukee Public Museum, 36582/9486

Figure 1.16: D.E. Emley; *Plan of a Turkana Village or Awi*; Drawing, Reproduced in "The Turkana of Kolosia District," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 57 (1927): 157-201.

Figure 1.17: Unidentified artist; Fat Container (*Eburi*); pre-1968; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide, leather; National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution E433086-0

Figure 1.18: Unidentified artist; Fat Container (*Eburi*); pre-1968; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, hide, leather; National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution E433103-0

Figure 2.1: Unidentified artist; Shield (*Aupwel*) (Front); 1900s; Turkana region, Kenya; Wood, Hide, Hair, Leather, Plant Fiber; American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8257

Figure 2.2: Unidentified artist; Shield (*Aupwel*) (Front); 1940s; Ferguson's Gulf, Kenya; Wood, Crocodile Hide, Pigment, Hair; American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8255

Figure 2.3: Unidentified artist; Shield (*Aupwel*) (Front); 1940s; Todenyang, Kenya; Wood, Hide, Hair; American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8254

Figure 2.4: Unidentified artist; Fish Trap; 1940s; Todenyang, Kenya; Wood, Plant Fiber, Cord; American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8411

Figure 2.5: William or Irene Morden; *Untitled*; Todenyang, Kenya; Photography; Reproduced in William J. Morden and Irene Morden, "The Little Known Turkanas," *Geographical Magazine: The Royal Geographical Society Magazine* 26, no. 1 (1953): 27.

Figure 2.6: Thomas D. Preston; 1961; Pencil on Paper; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/LDW/2/1/60, pp. 66a

Figure 3.1: Rowland Baker-Beall; *The Kerio Floors. Chief Kionga's Location*; 1932; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.2: Rowland Baker-Beall; *Burning the Bush*; 1931; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.3: Rowland Baker-Beall; *Roofing, November 1931*; 1931; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.4: Rowland Baker-Beall; *A Squad of Tribal Police*; 1931; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.5: Rowland Baker-Beall; *Cobwebby Tree at Amiarangan. W. Shore of Lake Rudolf.*; 1932; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.6: Rowland Baker-Beall; *Dark Tower. An Ancient Ash Crater, And Sand Dunes in the Suguta Valley.*; 1932; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.7: Rowland Baker-Beall; *Mapping at Amiarangan.*; 1932; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.8: Rowland Baker-Beall; *Teleki's Volcano and its Lava Flow*; 1932; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.9: Rowland Baker-Beall; *Interior of the circular Cone in the Lake. South Island visible in the extreme left background*; 1932; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.10: Rowland Baker-Beall; *The Best Grazing in Chief Abong's Location*; 1932; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.11: Rowland Baker-Beall; *Kaputir Water Supply. Sand well in the Turkwel River Bed.*; 1932; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.12: Rowland Baker-Beall; *Officer's House in Kaputir as seen from the New Offices.*; 1932; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Figure 3.13: Rowland Baker-Beall; *6:00pm. Retreat.*; 1932; Photograph; Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Introduction

It was early May 1932 and the winds had finally ceased their incessant howling long enough for Rowland Baker-Beall to collect his thoughts and assess the situation at hand. In a normal year, northwestern Kenya is buffeted by vicious sandstorms from February through April. They sweep across the region's arid grasslands, sandy deserts, and vast plateaus of volcanic rock, blinding those who happen to be caught out of doors and whipping the detritus of this arid, semi-desert into the air. *Lokwang* (The White Time'), the district's indigenous Turkana residents call the season, and there exists a canon of folktales that tell of dust devils who empty watering holes in the dead of night and lure men to their deaths in rocky escarpments by mimicking the sound of human speech.¹ Nevertheless, as bad as these storms are, they are survivable—bearable even, if given some time to adjust to their daily patterns.

But 1932 was no normal year. Two years before, in 1930, a once-in-a-generation drought had struck the sprawling, sparsely populated 8,810 square mile District of Southern Turkana. Rainfall, though normally far from plentiful, had decreased dramatically, with only 5.15 inches having fallen during that year's rainy season (*agiporo*).² And while 1931 saw a slight improvement in those numbers, only 0.9 inches of rain had fallen in the first quarter of 1932.³ As a result, the annual grasses that normally blanketed the plains between April and October

¹ John Lamphear, *The Scattering Time: Turkana Responses to Colonial Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 8; Baker-Beall records these stories, recounted to him by a Tribal Police sergeant named Aichakan, in KNA-DC/TURK/3/1: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, "Safari Report of Mr. R.W. Baker Beall and Mr. N.F. Kennaway through South and South West of Lake Turkana," 1932, 19-20 and 4, respectively.

² KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, "Appendix 1: Meteorological Records in 1930, 1931, & 1932" to "Annual Report, Southern Turkana, 1932," 1.

³*Ibid.*

had failed to sprout and the thorny scrub bushes and trees that eked out an existence in this dry savannah had begun to die *en masse*. There were few roots to hold the ground in place, which meant that these early-year storms were particularly intense.

Writing from his boiling-hot office in this remote and long-ago forgotten corner of Britain's colonial empire, Baker-Beall, then the longest-serving District Commissioner of Southern Turkana, described the effects of these sandstorms in vivid terms: "Apart from the effect of their monotonous career along the face of the Suk Escarpment, and the hourly disturbance of the papers on which one is writing or the books one is reading (both damaging the already frayed nerves); they bring with them a species of catarrh...There is a loss of appetite, headache, and a constant discharge of mucous matter from the back of the nose. In many cases there is a severe cough and spitting of blood."⁴

Baker-Beall, a cheerful, inquisitive twenty-nine-year-old who, at that point, had spent thirteen months as chief civil administrator of this vast and arid land, recognized that the failure of the rains brought with them myriad other problems, almost all of which dwarfed the increasing intensity of the dust storms. Even before the storms began, the new year brought with it reports of herds that were in "pitiful condition" and of "natives...living on bark and berries of the Adomi, Thiokoin, and Achalath trees."⁵ Any by April, the traditional beginning of *agiporo*, "cattle in Southern Turkana [were] ...almost non-existent," the vast majority having starved to death or been eaten as a last resort by increasingly desperate families.⁶

⁴ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, "Annual Report, Southern Turkana, 1932," 7-10. Catarrh is a term which refers to an excessive buildup and discharge of mucous in the nose and throat.

⁵ KNA-DC/TURK/4/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, "Intelligence Report, January 1932, Southern Turkana," 3.

⁶ KNA-DC/TURK/4/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, "Intelligence Report, April 1932, Southern Turkana," 3.

Though no stranger to famine and drought—Baker-Beall had served as a cadet and district officer during the 1929 famines in Meru and Kamba districts—the twenty-nine-year old officer was alarmed at the severity of the conditions seen throughout his district.⁷ However, after a noteworthy April rain—1.64 inches, or “the heaviest fall of rain in human memory”—he had high hopes that the year’s *agiporo* would revitalize the district and its people. The time for decisive action, he thought, had not yet arrived. Indeed, he had not yet applied for Famine Relief funds from Nairobi and even went so far as to write in early May that “The need for Famine Relief is not now so acute.”⁸ Nevertheless, he made sure to note in the monthly intelligence report he prepared for his superior in the provincial capital of Kapenguria that the Turkana’s “ability to pay tax in 1932 will be greatly lessened; since a great portion are now destitute.”⁹

Unfortunately for everyone involved, the heavy rains of April would prove to be representative of a trend far more disastrous than mere drought. Although the district did receive more rainfall in 1932 than it did in both 1930 and 1931, it came in the form of brief, torrential storms.¹⁰ Over four inches—a veritable monsoon by Southern Turkana standards—fell during the month of May alone.¹¹ However, instead of seeping into the soil and activating the seeds that had been lying dormant since the late 1920s, the deluge caused widespread

⁷ Juxon Barton, “Appointments,” *Kenya Gazette* 21, no. 2 (1929): 74; Juxon Barton, “Appointments,” *Kenya Gazette* 21, no. 6 (1929): 108; KNA-DC/TURK/4/2: Baker-Beall, “Intelligence Report for April 1932, Southern Turkana,” 3.

⁸ KNA-DC/TURK/4/2: Baker-Beall, “Intelligence Report, April 1932, Southern Turkana,” 3-4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: Baker-Beall, “Meteorological Records,” 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

erosion and washed away both the seeds and the thin layer of soil in which they were buried.¹² What survived this meteorological onslaught was nothing more than a “crop of weeds,” a species of nutrient-poor plants that could survive in the sands which now covered the vast majority of the district.¹³ Inedible to most living things, these weeds did little to stop the continuation and intensification of the famine. In July, even Nathan F. Kennaway, the stoic, understated Assistant District Commissioner, began to note with concern that “the country throughout [was] bare and desolate.”¹⁴ “It seems inexplicable,” he wrote, “that herds are able to live in a country with such scarcity of grazing available.”¹⁵

And indeed, they weren't. Baker-Beall, the more emotive and hyperbolic of the two officers, had spent fifty-five days in the rainy season (approximately 25% of the period) touring the district and had come to the conclusion that there were almost no oxen left in the entirety of the territory.¹⁶ More importantly still, he was beginning to suspect that “Southern Turkana never was and never will be an area capable of supporting anything approaching 15,000 people [the population of the district at the time].”¹⁷ Rather, using months' worth of interviews, he argued in a strident report dated early August 1932 that “the seizing of the [district] by the

¹² KNA-DC/LDW/2/23/3: R.W. Baker-Beall, “Safari Report of District Commissioner and Assistant District Commissioner, Southern Turkana, August 8th-18th,” 1.

¹³ *Ibid.* and KNA-DC/TURK/4/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, “Intelligence Report, July 1932, Southern Turkana,” 2.

¹⁴ KNA-DC/LDW/2/23/3: N.F. Kennaway, “Safari Report of Assistant District Commissioner, Southern Turkana, from 5 June to 29 June, 1932,” 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Calculated from monthly intelligence reports from April-October found KNA-DC/TURK/4/2 and safari reports from April-October found in KNA-DC/LDW/2/23/3; *Ibid.*

¹⁷ KNA-DC/TURK/4/2: Baker-Beall, “Intelligence Report, July 1932, Southern Turkana” 2.

Ngiturkana happened at a far later date than is generally supposed and that...The intervention of Government has placed a temporary, artificial barrier against their progress Southwards.”¹⁸ Put another way, what Baker-Beall was arguing was that the British colonialism had trapped the Turkana in a land that could not support them, effectively condemning them to die. “Without some assistance by the provision of fresh grazing,” he concluded chillingly, “I can only look forward to their extinction as a tribe.”¹⁹

In this, at least, Baker-Beall was wrong. Although the drought and resulting famine of the early 1930s did claim nearly fifty percent of the district’s herd animals, its effect on the human population was decidedly less dramatic.²⁰ While many perished due to starvation or dehydration, most Turkana families survived. Indeed, as mobile stock herders, the district’s indigenous population was, in some ways, uniquely suited to the challenge posed by this ecological disaster. Unbound from the specific plots of land—to farms or permanent houses—the district’s men, women, and children survived in the ways their ancestors had for generations: 1) by traveling longer and more frequently in search of scarcer-and-scarcer vegetation, and 2) by relying on the generosity of a wide network of family and friends

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰ This death toll was first speculated to be fifty percent in KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: A.M. Champion, “Annual Report for the Province of Turkana, 1932,” 24—when the drought was still in full swing—and remained unchanged at its conclusion according to Provincial Champion. See KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: A.M. Champion, “Annual Report for the Province of Turkana, 1933,” 5. However, Nathan F. Kennaway, the Asst. District Commissioner of Southern Turkana, estimated that some of the larger species in the district—notably, cattle—had achieved a mortality rate of seventy-five percent. See KNA-DC/TURK/3/2: N.F. Kennaway, “Safari Report of N.F. Kennaway, 20 April 1933 to 25 April 1933,” 2.

developed over a lifetime of frequent movement across northwestern Kenya.²¹ It was, in some ways, business as usual. Elders had experienced conditions like this in their youth and knew how to respond. What no one, however, expected was that the survivors would be faced with yet another “once-in-a-generation” drought less than ten years later. And then five years after that.

A Brief History of Northwestern Kenya and its Environment

When British colonial administrators—among the first group of people to produce extant written records of northwestern Kenya—first entered the region now known as Turkana County in 1903, they knew next to nothing about the land and its inhabitants. Although a handful of Europeans had passed through the country on various exploratory missions and given brief accounts of the land and the people who made it their home, records from the district were scant.²² Indeed, the land was so remote that even the ever-adventurous Swahili-coast merchants did not reach it until mid-to-late nineteenth century.²³ What was known, however, was that it was hot. Hot and dry. Ludwig von Höhnel, an Austrian naval officer who accompanied the first European expedition through the region in 1888, described it most

²¹ For more information on societal adaptation to challenging ecological conditions in northwestern Kenya see J. Terrence McCabe, “Patterns and Processes of Group Movement in Human Nomadic Populations: A Case Study of the Turkana of Northwestern Kenya,” in *On the Move: How and Why Humans Travel in Groups*, eds. Sue Boinski and Paul A. Garber (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 649-677 and J. Terrence McCabe, *Cattle Bring us to Our Enemies; Ecology, Politics, and Raiding in a Disequilibrium System* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

²² For a thorough accounting of these expeditions, see Pascal James Imperato, *Quest for the Jade Sea: Colonial Competition around an East African Lake* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

²³ Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 59-87.

frequently as “dreary.” Indeed, the word appears twenty-nine times in his account of the party’s two weeks in the region, oftentimes in passages such as this:

A couple of hours’ forced march across a dreary, almost barren steppe brought us to a little wood fringing the channel of a second dried-up stream. The heat was intense, and as various signs proved this to be a native halting-place we rested here for the hottest mid-day hours. We found a little water in a shallow hole. The fact that the fairly dense vegetation on the banks consisted entirely of fan-palms gave the stream a very unusual appearance. The trees grew closely together, some of them rising from islets and sandbanks in the channel itself, whilst here and there lay other which had fallen in their old age or been uprooted by the force of the stream, which twice in the year rushes violently along. The ground was strewn with withered leaves, relieving but little the monotony of the dreary, naked landscape.²⁴

And while this description may seem a touch hyperbolic, for these early European travelers who encountered this imposing tract of land, it most likely was not. Although not a desert, this arid grassland is classified as a very arid or arid ecoclimatic zone, terms that refer to “rangeland of low potential” and “land suited for agriculture only where fertile soil coincides with very favorable distribution of rain.”²⁵ Indeed, with an average temperature that hovers between 85°F and 95°F and an average annual rainfall that has rarely exceeded seven inches, *Eturkan* is rightly classified as one of the driest places in eastern Africa.²⁶ On the ground, this translates into a landscape defined more by absence than by presence. Although grasses sprout

²⁴ Ludwig von Höhnel, *Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie: A Narrative of Samuel Teleki’s Exploring and Hunting Expedition in Eastern Equatorial Africa in 1887 & 1888, Volume II* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company), 242.

²⁵ McCabe, *Cattle Bring us to Our Enemies*, 43 and D.J. Pratt, J.R. Blackie, M.D. Gwynne, *Rangeland Management and Ecology in East Africa* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978).

²⁶ Rada Dyson-Hudson and J. Terrence McCabe, *South Turkana Nomadism: Coping with an Unpredictably Varying Environment* (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1985), 82 and James E. Ellis, M.B. Coughenour, and David M. Swift, “Climate Variability, Ecosystem Stability, and the Implications for Range and Livestock Development,” in *Range Ecology at Disequilibrium: New Models of Natural Variability and Pastoral Adaptation in African Savannas*, eds. R.H. Behnke Jr., I. Scoones, and M.V. Brown, 31-41 (London: Overseas Development Institute, 1993).

with the coming of the rains, for the majority of the year, northwestern Kenya is remarkably brown, defined by the vast expanses of clay or sandy soil that cover two-thirds of this low-lying plain in the heart of the East African Rift.

Averages, however, only tell a part of the story. While the land may, in the world of one colonial administrator, be “passably bearable” given ‘very favorable rain’, the likelihood of such has historically been far from certain. Indeed, precipitation in the region fluctuates drastically, both from year to year and from place to place. A location may receive favorable rain in one year and then fail to see any at all for the next three. Indeed, an analysis of meteorological records from the twentieth century indicates that rainfall in the region has dropped thirty-three percent or more a total of thirteen times.²⁷ Put another way, this means that the average rainfall in the district has fallen below five inches a year once every three to four years. And that is for the district as a whole. Zoom in further and written records and historical accounts will tell of entire hectares that have seen little if any water over the course of a decade.

What results from this is an ecosystem that, in the words of one scientist, is “chronically poised between collapse and some stage of recovery.”²⁸ Each year the district enters a drought—defined as a fifteen percent drop in average annual rainfall—plant biomass in the region decreases by a minimum of fifty percent.²⁹ That means a fifty percent reduction in plant

²⁷ James E. Ellis and David M. Swift, “Stability of African Pastoral Ecosystems: Alternative Paradigms and Implications for Development,” *Journal of Range Management* 41, no. 6 (1988): 450-459.

²⁸ Sandra Gray, Paul Leslie, and Helen Alinga Akol, “Uncertain Disaster: Environmental Instability, Colonial Policy, and Resilience of East African Pastoral Systems,” in *Human Biology of Pastoral Populations*, eds. William R. Leonard and Michael H. Crawford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 103.

²⁹ Stoddart, L. A., A.D. Smith, and T.W. Box, *Range Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1975).

growth and a fifty percent reduction in the nutritional content that supports the rest of the food chain.

Today, environments such as this are known as persistent but non-equilibrium-based ecosystems, a phrase that refers to an area that demonstrates a consistent pattern of instability (a pattern of having no pattern, if you will). A relatively recent arrival in the field of ecology, the notion of non-equilibrium first emerged in the middle years of the twentieth century and rose to prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At its core was a profound challenge to the long-accepted notion of environmental homeostasis, a concept nearly as old as the discipline itself. Up until that point, natural systems were thought to be closed, self-regulating structures that trended toward stability. Indeed, the idea is nearly as old as the discipline itself. In the absence of disruptive human activity, the thinking went, environment grew until reaching what was termed a 'climax community' and then continued in perpetuity without change. Take Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, for instance. In the text, Darwin writes: "Battle within battle must be continually recurring (in nature) with varying success and yet in the long-run the forces are so nicely balanced, that the face of nature remains uniform for long periods of time."³⁰

Yet, as new technologies and shifting research interests brought the structure of historic ecosystems into better view, this view began to shift. "Change," the ecologist Daniel Botkin wrote in 1990, "now appears to be intrinsic and natural at many scales of time and space in the biosphere" and headlines in *The New York Times* trumpeted "New Eye on Nature: The Real

³⁰ Quoted in Klaus Rohde, *Nonequilibrium Ecology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6.

Constant is Eternal Turmoil.”³¹ And while there were (and are still) debates about the size and scale of these environments—are all ecosystems non-equilbrial or do only some diverge from ecological homeostasis—a consensus quickly developed around arid and semi-arid environments south of Africa’s Sahara Desert. On the whole, scientists and policy experts have concluded, almost all of these environments are thought to be persistent by non-equilibrium-based ecosystems.

In northwestern Kenya, the notion of a land chronically and naturally out-of-sync has done much to explain the persistence of drought, famine, and humanitarian disaster. Prior to this discovery, it had largely been assumed—by both colonial and post-colonial governments alike—that the land’s failure to support the human and animal populations was unnatural and linked to human activity. Scholars and government officials assumed that, based on the ecological knowledge propagated at the time, that if there were persistent environmental failures then their cause must be artificial and could be solved by simple behavior modification. Turkana herders and their herd and livestock management strategies were the frequent (and indeed, almost sole) targets for criticism. Had they diversified their herds and grazed them in different places, countless officials told them, the land would not be so barren, so devoid of life. As a result, the British and Kenyan governments wasted precious time and resources countless attempts settle traditionally mobile communities and alter grazing patterns that had been in place for generations—all of which failed to produce the desired results.

³¹ Daniel B. Botkin, *Discordant Harmonies: A New Ecology for the Twenty First Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 9.

It was in this frustration and desperation that that notion of non-equilibrium ecology took hold. Beginning in the mid-1970s, around the same time that another devastating multi-year drought struck northwestern Kenya, ecologists and anthropologists started to explore the linkages between climate, ecology, and nomadic lifestyle using what was then-called Turkana District as their case study. The South Turkana Ecosystem Projects (STEP) was thus born. A decade-long project involving a small army of researchers across a variety of disciplines, STEP provided one of the most detailed and holistic pictures on the relationship between human activity and the environment in existence. This research proved to be cornerstone for studies into non-equilibrium-based ecosystems and produced a truly impressive literature on the human geography, ecology, and anthropology of the nomadic pastoralist mode of production. Equally as important, STEP helped spur climatologists to examine the meteorological causes of dryland ecosystems in more detail, resulting in publications that linked the volatile and chaotic nature of Turkana ecosystems to meteorological idiosyncrasies such a low-level jet streams and fluctuations in the surface temperature of the Indian Ocean.³²

Yet, as scientifically accurate as the notion of persistent but non-equilibrium-based ecosystems may very well be, the notion can a-historicize the natural world in much the same

³² The Turkana jet, a low-level atmospheric jet stream that runs over the entirety of northwestern Kenya, bears much of the blame for the region's aridity. See Sharon Nicholson, "The Turkana Low-Level Jet: Mean Climatology and its Association with Regional Aridity," *International Journal of Climatology* 36, no. 6 (2016): 2598-2614. And the changes in rainfall have been linked to fluctuations in the surface temperature of the Indian Ocean, which fluctuates drastically due to the El Nino-Southern Oscillation. See Emily Black, "The Relationship between Indian Ocean Sea Surface Temperature and East African Rainfall," *Philosophical Transactions: Mathematical, Physical, and Engineering Sciences* 363, no. 1826 (2005): 43-47. However, as Glenn Trewartha noted in his discussion of "problem climates," eastern African aridity is also linked to the effects of two monsoon patterns, divergent flow, a relatively shallow moist atmospheric layer, stable thermal stratification, frictional divergence and cold upwelling along the coast, rain shadow effects from the highlands, and anticyclonic circulation. See Trewartha, *The Earth's Problem Climates* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

way as the conceit of a stable, primeval world. After all, when chaos is viewed as normal, then it becomes all too easy to stop paying attention to variations in the size and scale of that chaos. As a species, we are already prone to what the ecologist Daniel Pauly has termed “shifting baseline syndrome.”³³ We tend to believe that the world as we experience it today is the way it has always been—and will always be.³⁴ This is part of what makes it so hard to convince skeptics about the realities of climate change. Add to that the notion that certain environments are already prone to instability and you have a situation in which misunderstanding and misreading all too likely.

Take, for instance, the impact of STEP on the understanding of the climate and ecology of northwestern Kenya. Prior to the project and its embrace of the non-equilibrium, both the British colonial administration and the independent government of post-colonial Kenya noted with concern the increasing degradation of the land in northwestern Kenya. A look into the archives tells the following tale: At the beginning of the twentieth century—when the first reliable written records from the region began to be produced with some degree of regularity—British colonial officers viewed the Turkana District as challenging, but ultimately survivable.

Harry Rayne, a British military officer who worked in the district between 1905 and 1911, provided what is perhaps the best summary of the common view at the outset of the century:

Turkana in the rains, although by no means a health resort, is passably bearable. The country is then covered with a short succulent grass that supports hundreds of

³³ Daniel Pauly, “Anecdotes and the Shifting Baseline Syndrome of Fisheries,” *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 10 (October 1995), 430.

³⁴ One of the most striking illustrations of this is W. Jeffrey Bolster’s stunning history of fishing in the North Atlantic. See Bolster, *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

thousands of heads of cattle, donkeys, camels, sheep, and goats. But in the dry season it is a miniature hell; the country burns up to desert, and it is marvelous how the animals survive.³⁵

The perspective expressed by Rayne began to change in the 1930s and 1940s.

Stated one colonial officer with experience in the region:

In 1927, when I traveled to Turkana by foot safari, the first 20 miles or so below the Nepau Escarpment was covered with comparatively good grazing. There were many cattle and small stock to be seen in localities, game was fairly plentiful, Guinea fowl provided good shooting, and to the West, below Moroto, Rhino were uncomfortably numerous. When I toured the same country in 1934 grass has for the most part disappeared and stock, game and birds were less numerous. Mild dust storms were a frequent occurrence during this period. I was told by Mr. C.B. Thompson, who took over for me in early 1935 that during his tour the country improved considerably, and grass appeared again on account of good rains for two successive years. To-day, after several poor years and severe droughts during 1938 and 1939, this is for the most part, a desolate wasteland. Dust storms are an almost daily occurrence and I doubt if a handful of grass could be collected over 100 square miles.³⁶

Nor was this experience merely anecdotal. As the twentieth century entered its middle years, the British administration began to express more and more anxiety over the conditions found in Turkana District—and throughout the northern part of the colony more generally. And in 1943, the administration commissioned a multi-year study on the environmental conditions in the region. The resulting report, published in 1945, painted a grim picture of this district and its future:

This comparatively low-lying country just north of the equator is probably the hottest area in the whole of East Africa, and it experiences the lowest rainfall...The soil in many localities is extremely hard at a few inches deep...The vegetation is indicative of an extremely dry climate; its main constituents are the result of such conditions over a prolonged period, and they are not, except in localized areas, changed in any

³⁵ Harry Rayne, "Turkana, Part I," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 18, no. 71 (1919): 184.

³⁶ KNA-DC/LDW/13/4: Denis McKay, "Annual Report for the District of Turkana, 1939," 3-4

appreciable degree by utilization...There is ample evidence that a slow process of drying-up has taken place and is probably still in progress- to-day...It should be emphasized that the scheme outlined is essentially based on increased seasonal migration of tribesmen and animals, and that no form of permanent occupation of dry area be permitted...On account of the rapid destruction of the vegetation that is taking place in localized areas the early application of control measure is imperative.³⁷

Compare these increasingly distressed descriptions with the view expressed by James Ellis and David Swift, the most prominent ecologists who worked on STEP: “Despite the dynamic nature of the ecosystem,” they write, “there is little evidence of degradation or imminent system failure. Instead, this ecosystem and its pastoral inhabitants are relatively stable in response to the major stresses on the system, e.g. frequent and severe droughts.”³⁸ The difference is striking—and can be found in the work of almost all humanistic social scientists who worked under and after STEP. And while their work is not inaccurate, records on the ground indicate that the region has become hotter, drier, and more inhospitable with each passing year. Rainfall, after all, remains erratic. But studies have shown that it has decreased, on average, by twenty five percent from 1940 to 2016. It is also getting hotter. Kenyan government statistics compiled between 1967 and 2012 note an increase in average daytime and nighttime temperatures of an astounding 3.6°F and 5.4°F, respectively. (In contrast, the mean temperature on Earth has increased by 1.5°F in the last century).³⁹ Summarized Philip Tioko, a forty-seven-year-old resident of the Lake Turkana-adjacent village of Kalokol, “We used

³⁷ KNA-DC/TURK/3/1: D.C. Edwards, “Report on the Grazing Areas of Turkana District of Kenya,” 7 May 1945, 3; 13; 13; 14; 21; 23.

³⁸ Ellis and Swift, “Stability of African Pastoral Ecosystems,” 453.

³⁹ Data obtained by and published in Sean Avery, *Lake Turkana & the Lower Omo: Hydrological Impacts of Major Dam & Irrigation Development* (Oxford: University of Oxford African Studies Centre, 2012), 123.

to have droughts, but they didn't finish everything. I'd remain with at least five goats, and then I could start over again, but then there was the drought that finished everything."⁴⁰

Writing Art History in the Anthropocene

Reading these reports in 2019—the heyday of climate awareness—what becomes clear is that to truly understand the relationship between humans and their environment in *Eturkan* we must set aside the analytic of 'persistent but non-equilibrium based ecosystem' and move toward a mode of thinking that considers deterioration to be the dominant ecological paradigm. This dissertation seeks to do just that. It starts with the assumption that the environment in Turkana is changing and that those changes have negatively impacted the ability of humans to survive in the land. With that as its guiding lodestar, the project goes on to examine the ways that human beings have creatively responded to this increasing ecological instability. How, it asks, does environmental disaster and a state of permanent precarity alter the material objects produced in region? As day-to-day life changes, how do the formal properties and functional use of these works change?

This is, I should say, not a dissertation concerned with the ways in which the environment has been depicted by the men and women who have made northwestern Kenya their home. I am not interested in issues of environmental representation. Nor is it a

⁴⁰ Quoted in Abigail Higgins, "Climate Change Could Devastate Africa. It's Already Hurting This Kenyan Town," *The Washington Post*, January 30 2016.

compendium of Turkana art and material culture.⁴¹ This has been done.⁴² Rather, this project is about the ways in which the changing climate in northwestern Kenya changed human creative thought—and with it, human creative production. As such, it examines a cache of objects that, at least outwardly, do not seem to bear any relation to the climate or the ecology northwestern Kenya. Indeed, in many ways, these works are merely things that, though slightly strange-looking, still replicate historically-resonant forms, structures, and genres. But it is this strangeness, these relatively minor deviations from established norms that this project uses as its jumping off point. Indeed, I argue the strangeness of these objects owe their form or existence in part to the district’s rising temperatures, desiccating savannahs, and increasing lack of rain. By altering the patterns of human life and thought in which certain object types were embedded, the environment of the district created a series of new and hybrid forms and structures. Think of it as an end result of a chain reaction.

Put more theoretically, I am arguing that we foreground the physical world as an analytic category in its own right. It is more than just a backdrop, a location that artists represent or use as a ground for artistic interventions and performances. Rather, in the era of climate change, it is an active agent, a vital force that, in northwestern Kenya at least, plays a

⁴¹ I am not, for instance, analyzing any of what is perhaps the most well-known form of art in the region: beadwork [Figure 0.1]. The reason for this is simple, I could not, despite my best efforts, find any clear enough link between colonialism, climate change, and the evolution of Turkana-made jewelry and beaded garments. Although there is a clear a definitive link between colonialism and beadwork, the link between climate change and beadwork is much more tenuous. This is not to say that there is not a connection; there very well might be. I just was unable to uncover one. Indeed, unlike areas further to the south (e.g. in Maasai country), there are comparatively scant records about the beadwork in this area of northwestern Kenya. An intensive round of on-the-ground research and an exhaustive search through the archives of bead-producing companies might very well produce actionable information, but that was beyond the scope of what I was able to do while researching this dissertation.

⁴² And it has been done quite well. For this, I recommend Lydia Gatundu, “Traditional Art and the Individual: An Ethnographic Investigation of Turkana Kitchen Art,” (M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 2010) and Anthony Fedders and Cynthia Salvadori, *Turkana Pastoral Craftsmen* (Nairobi: Transafrica, 1977).

critical role in shaping and re-shaping societal *habitus*. Environmental conditions have largely been left out discussions of *habitus*, in part because practice theory is written by individuals located within environments of a similar nature. As such, the influence of their own environment becomes a *doxa*, or blind spot, in its own right. The importance of the physical world in shaping *habitus* becomes clear if you turn your attention to the worlds occupied by nomadic populations. In these worlds, environmental condition that preclude large-scale agricultural production and its resultant sedenterization force populations to move their bodies and their herds on a relatively frequent basis. This, in turn, molds philosophical beliefs and entire social structures.

In writing this, I am, in essence, arguing for an agentive climate, an assemblages of temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind, and precipitation that has become what Bruno Latour would call an “actant,” that is to say an “entity that modifies another entity,” a non-human thing that’s “competence is deduced from its performance.”⁴³ As is now common knowledge, Earth’s climate was relatively stable for most of the last 11,000 years of human history. However, as many theorists have argued, humanity’s actions have destabilized this climactic regime to such an extent that we have created a new geological age: the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene’s effects are myriad and have been detailed in studies ranging across a wide array of humanistic and scientific disciplines. Most relevant to my project, though, is the belief that the Earth’s climate has been destabilized to such an extent that it has,

⁴³ Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 237.

in many way, become an agentive being.⁴⁴ Like Dr. Frankenstein, humanity (or, to put a finer point on it, Euro-American humanity) has vivified formerly inanimate matter, giving it properties that, if not exactly agentive, are at the very least goal-oriented.

The social sciences have long recognized the impact the environment has on the lives of people. The Southern Turkana Ecology Project and the knowledge that it created is just one example of many. But believing that the environment structures human action is very different than believing that the environment structures human thought—and with it, human creativity (a by-product of thought). For thought has been long been regarded as that one thing that distinguishes us from other animals, that makes us the only species that is not a species. It is perhaps for this reason that the humanities have been so slow to embrace the belief, perhaps best argued by the environmental philosopher Christopher J. Preston, that “our physical environment comes to play an important role in structuring how we think.”⁴⁵ Indeed, as the Preston has shown, humanistic scholarship is built on a foundation that separates human experience from human thought. Think, here, of Descartes’ “I think therefore, I am.”⁴⁶ Of Locke’s argument that reason is “a candle of the Lord set up by himself in the men’s minds.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ In making this argument I am indebted to the political philosopher Jane Bennett’s writing on the vital materialism and the ways in which “things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will of humans but also act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own.” See Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), viii. Her discussion of the agency of the electrical grid is particularly important to my thinking.

⁴⁵ Christopher J. Preston, *Grounding Knowledge: Environmental Philosophy, Epistemology, and Place* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003), xi.

⁴⁶ Indeed, in making his point, Locke reasoned that “For if I say I see, or I walk, therefore I am; and if I understand by vision or walking the act of my eyes or limbs, which is the work of the body, the conclusion is not absolutely certain...” See René Descartes, *A Discourse on Method*, trans. John Veitch (New York: E.P Dutton, 1916), 167.

⁴⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: T. Tegg and Sons, 1836), 424.

And of Socrates' counsel that, in order to prepare for oneself knowledge, one must "separate the soul as much as possible from the body and accustom it to withdrawing from all contact with the body and concentrate itself by itself."⁴⁸

African art history, is, I think, a fertile field for this sort of work to begin. After all, Suzanne Preston Blier has long-argued that "the artist and viewer (observer) represent only a small part of the larger meaning base [for artworks]," an argument that has been embraced by a number of Africanist art historians in the last two decades.⁴⁹ Steven Nelson has, for instance, explored this contention in depth through his analysis of the transforming meanings of Mousgoum *teleuk* structures from northern Cameroon.⁵⁰ And the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art has recently won wide acclaim for re-installing its permanent collection around seven different viewpoints from which African art can be approached and analyzed.⁵¹ Moreover, a number of Africanist art historians have argued, in one way or the other, that "looking is a cultural determined activity of visibility."⁵² And while all of these scholars and

⁴⁸ Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. Hugh Tredennick, in *Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961)

⁴⁹ Suzanne Preston Blier, "Truth and Seeing: Magic, Custom, and Fetish in Art History," in *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to Social Sciences and the Humanities*, eds. Robert H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O'Barr, 139-166 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 147. For more on Blier's argument see: Suzanne Preston Blier, "Words about Words about Icons: Iconology and the Study of African Art," *Art Journal* 47, no. 2 (1988): 75-87.

⁵⁰ Steven Nelson, *From Cameroon to Paris: Mousgoum Architecture in & out of Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007

⁵¹ "Association of Art Museum Curators Announce 2018 Awards for Excellence," *ArtForum*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.artforum.com/news/association-of-art-museum-curators-announce-2018-awards-for-excellence-75314>.

⁵² Mary Nooter Roberts, "The Inner Eye: Vision and Transcendence in African Arts," *African Arts* 50, no. 1 (2017): 60. Other works that argue for cultural constructions of visibility include: Rowland Abiodun, "Understanding Yoruba Art and Aesthetics: The Concept of Ase," *African Arts* 27, no. 3 (1994): 68-78+102-103, Mary Nooter Roberts, ed., *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals* (New York: Museum for African Art, 1993); and Susan Vogel, *Baule: African Art/Western Eyes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

institutions have all argued these points in relations to human (or formerly human) actors, in an scholarly age defined, by the rise new materialism and the posthumanities, it certainly should not be too great of leap between these positions and the one that I have proposed. And indeed, as several exhibitions focused largely on contemporary African art have shown, there is a strong relationship between artistic practice and the environmental forces that shape the worlds that artists occupy.⁵³

Methodology and the Importance of History

It should, however, be stated directly that this dissertation is not just about the ways that the climate and ecosystem of the Turkana with has influenced artmaking. Nor should any project be about that. A work like that wreaks of environmental determinism. And that is not what I am arguing; that is not what this dissertation is about. Far from it. Rather, it is my contention that the climate is just one of many factors that shapes human action, human thought, and human creativity. Dominant though it is, there are other factors that must be considered. History is one of them.

For this project, the salient historical factors that I will be analyzing are those related to British colonialism during the late colonial period—a temporal designation that, in Turkana, begins with the transition from military to civil administration in 1926 and ends with Kenyan independence in 1963. Although the Britain’s first colonial encroachment into Turkana-held territory began in 1903, the country did not, in the language of the Berlin Conference, achieve

⁵³ I am thinking here of “Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor in the Arts of Africa” at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (2013) and “Environment and Object: Recent African Art” (2012). See Karen E. Milbourne, *Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor in the Arts of Africa* (Washington, DC: National Museum of African Art, 2013).

effective occupation over the region until 1926. The period of Turkana massive resistance was long and quite bloody. It has also been the primary focus of the more-historically minded scholars who have studied the region.⁵⁴ As such, there is much open ground to cover in the late colonial period. Not only is it a timespan when the effects of climate change began to truly be felt (or at least felt and recorded), but it is also an era in which the effects of British colonialism began to reach its peak and be felt in every area of life.

The decision to focus on this period, however, was driven less out of a desire to explore the late colonial period, and more out the limitations encountered by undertaking research. The majority of accessible artworks that can be verifiably dated—and thus, with research, linked to specific events and places—come from the late colonial period. (Object collection, unsurprisingly, was both not a priority and all-too-challenging during the period of Turkana massive resistance.) Most of these works reside in museums. And it was these collections—specifically the collections of the American Museum of Natural History, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Milwaukee Public Museum, the Murumbi Gallery at the Kenya National Archives, the Nairobi National Museum, the National Museum of Natural History, and the Penn Museum—that serve as the basis for this project. The vast majority of these objects were collected between 1930 and 1970. Indeed, of all the major holdings of artwork from northwestern Kenya, only the Milwaukee Public Museum cares for objects likely

⁵⁴ John Lamphear's study of Turkana history really ends in 1926. He devotes only one, very short chapter to the history of the region in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Although the late colonial time period sees a flourishing of anthropological scholarship, mainly under the direction of P.H. Gulliver, the historical detail was limited. See, for example, P.H. Gulliver, *A Preliminary Survey of the Turkana: A Report Compiled for the Government of Kenya* (Cape Town: Communications from the School of African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1951).

created prior to the imposition of British civil administration.⁵⁵ And though incredibly helpful in establishing a baseline for what artworks looked like prior to dramatic worsening of the climate, Milwaukee's collection is not large enough for any systematic study. As such, a decision was made to focus on the relationship between creativity and climate change in the late colonial period.

Objects in each of these collections were examined in person, with specific attention being paid to measuring and documenting the formal properties of each work.⁵⁶ Using these physical indicators, I then used accession files and donor records at each of these institutions to establish the likely date of creation for each object. In many instances, these files were also helpful in linking objects to specific places in northwestern Kenya. With this cache of information, I was able to construct a time of formal evolution in northwestern Kenya. This generalized stylistic timeline was then contextualized with research conducted in Kenya, primarily at the Kenyan National Archives and Documentation Service. Over the course of the five months, I poured through any and all records from the late colonial period housed at the Kenyan National Archives in Nairobi, the National Anthropological Archives in Suitland, Maryland, and the Human Studies Film Archives in Suitland, Maryland. Further contextualization—mainly, contemporary perceptions of objects and climate change—was then attempted through two short visits to Lodwar.

⁵⁵ The Milwaukee Public Museum sent the Cudahee-Massey Expedition into northwestern in the latter half of 1928, a mere two years after the imposition of civil administration. Most of the objects collected on this expedition show significant signs of use, and many show extensive repairs. This suggest that they were created prior to the imposition of British civil administration.

⁵⁶ Given the small cache of objects—two—cared for by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, I did not examine these works in person.

Learning to See in the Desert

What results from this research are three chapters, each of which discusses an episode in which the changing climate of northwestern Kenya interacted with the policies and procedures of British civil administration to alter both the societal *habitus* and the creative production of the region. Each focuses on a series of novel and somewhat exceptional objects, artworks that's formal qualities make them stand out as aberrant or somehow different from the objects that preceded them. And it is this novelty that dissertation seek to unpack. Indeed, the task assumed by each chapter is to explain the ways in which climate change and colonialism interacted to produce a particular formal structures found throughout the region of northwestern Kenya during the late colonial period.

In setting these goals, I build on the work of Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, who has argued that innovative artistic forms emerge through a process of individual negotiation between self and society. Drawing from Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory, Kasfir argues that colonial artistic practice involves the "the artist as an individual constructing his or her own practices as part of the larger collectivity."⁵⁷ And while this mediation can, in many ways, be said to take place for all artists across all of time and space, Kasfir argues that it is particularly prominent during the colonial period. Indeed, in her study on South African Zionism, Jean Comaroff has argued that colonization creates new symbolic orders through a process of bricolage, where "complexes of signs are thus disengaged from their former contexts and take on transformed meanings in their new associations, a process constantly repeated in relation to modified material

⁵⁷ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, *African Art and the Colonial Encounter: Inventing a Global Commodity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 11; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory in Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

circumstances.”⁵⁸ The goal of this dissertation is thus twofold: 1) to examine the ways that climate change and colonialism modified the material and mental structures of the people living in northwestern Kenya and, 2) to articulate how these transformations affected the creative production of the region.

Chapters One and Two discuss the ways in which the changing climate altered the art and material cultural of indigenous Turkana populations. Chapter One takes a broad look at the formal transformation of Turkana-made artworks in the late colonial period. It argues that what Donna Pido has called “the Turkana love of conic sections”—that is to say, the parabolic shapes that outline a great number of Turkana-made objects—originated in the late colonial period.⁵⁹ More importantly still, it contends that this unique formal transformation can be linked to the increasingly transient movements of Turkana men and women instigated by both a worsening climate and the inter-district movement restriction imposed by the British colonial government.

Chapter Two analyzes the artworks produced by climate refugees who were settled by the British colonial administration in famine relief camps along Lake Rudolf (Turkana).⁶⁰ Having lost all of their herds as a result of the famine and drought, these impoverished individuals had not only their lives, but their entire mode of production transformed almost overnight. Torn between two worlds—a nomadic past and a sedentary present; a pastoralist ontology and a

⁵⁸ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of South African People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 119.

⁵⁹ Donna Klumpp Pido, “Considering Indigenous Design Paradigms in Education and Practice,” unpublished paper delivered at Art, Design, Education: Exchange with Africa symposium at University of Art and Design, Helsinki, 14 and 15 June 2001.

⁶⁰ I will use the designation Lake Rudolf (Turkana) throughout this dissertation to signal both that the name of this body of water during the late colonial period was Lake Rudolf and that this name was changed after independence.

capitalist ideology—these men and women produced a series of artworks that reflect this liminal position. An examination of the strange and incredibly innovative objects produced by these individuals allows us to understand the material and mental dynamics that occur when nomads are forced to settle and adapt to life in a colonial, capitalist state.

Chapter Three concludes the main analytical thrust of the project by examining the ways in which the changing climate altered the photography of Rowland Baker-Beall, a British citizen who lived in northwestern Kenya between the years of 1931 and 1933. As District Commissioner of Southern Turkana during the beginning of the British civil administration's first major drought and famine episode, Baker-Beall was the colonizer tasked with responding to various climatological disasters and the social precarities that they instigated. This chapter discusses how Baker-Beall's experiences in the land of northwestern Kenya transformed his relationship with the indigenous population, making him a kinder, more empathetic administrator. This can be seen in his photography, which shifts from banal shots of the colonial administration's "civilizing mission" to moody, atmospheric depictions of desolate landscapes.

Although it is somewhat unusual in African art history to focus on artworks produced by a non-indigenous person, I believe it necessary and vital to do so in this instance. Indeed, as a resident of the district, Baker-Beall was just as affected by the changing climate as anyone else. And as such, his creative production is just as valid as a subject of inquiry as any other residents. In the era of climate change we must follow Bruno Latour's call to ground ourselves in the "Terrestrial" world, which to say bind ourselves to a the soil in a way that "aligns with no

borders [and] transcends all identities.”⁶¹ Indeed, by discussing works created by a non-indigenous person, I hope to demonstrate that an environmental analytic can be applied to any person and any artist, regardless of whether or not they are nomadic or sedentary, indigenous or non-indigenous.

The project then concludes with a discussion of the contemporary relevance of this historical project. Climate change, after all, is not going away. It is only a matter of time until the conditions experienced in northwestern Kenya become a reality for many, if not all, of us. Indeed, following Jean and John L. Comaroff—who have argued that neoliberal economic conditions have allowed the Global South to develop a “privileged insight into the workings of the world at large,” which “prefigure the future of the global north”—I argue that we can see our creative futures in the men and women who lived in northwestern Kenya during the late colonial period.⁶²

⁶¹ Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in a New Climactic Regime*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 54.

⁶² Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 1.

REFUGEE AESTHETICS: Art and Objecthood in an Age of Precarity

In 1939, a mere five years after the drought and famine cycle of 1932-1934, a calamitous climactic event once again struck the newly merged District of Turkana.⁶³ Like that earlier episode, the 1939 event began with a failure of the rains. Only 0.20 inches of rain fell in the first three months of the year, and, by the end of February, administrators were reporting “heavy mortality amongst the Turkana flocks and herds...[as well as] a shortage of food.”⁶⁴ June brought with it descriptions of “arid wastelands,” and hundred-mile regions “without a single blade of grass.”⁶⁵ Little changed throughout the rest of the year—except for a double outbreak of anthrax and bovine pleuro-pneumonia that added to the already sky-high stock mortality rate.⁶⁶ It was, in the words of then-District Commissioner Denis McKay, “one of the worst [years] in Turkana history,” and, when all was accounted for, it was estimated that the district lost fifty percent of its sheep and goats, twenty-five percent of its cattle and donkeys, and an untold number of people, some of whom died after being forced to eat the carcasses of diseased stock.⁶⁷

⁶³ The Districts of Northern Turkana and Southern Turkana were merged in 1934.

⁶⁴ KNA-DC/LDW/2/13/1: Denis McKay, “Monthly Intelligence Report, February 1939,” 8 March 1939, 2 and KNA-DC/LDW/2/13/1: Denis McKay, “Monthly Intelligence Report, March 1939,” 8 April 1939, 1.

⁶⁵ KNA-DC/LDW/2/13/1: Denis McKay, “Monthly Intelligence Report, June 1939,” 7 July 1939, 1 and KNA-DC/LDW/2/13/1: A.C.C. Swann, “Safari Report,” 3 July 1939, 5. The hundred mile region referred to in the latter document is the relatively fertile, 93 mile stretch of land between Kaputir and Lodwar.

⁶⁶ KNA-DC/TURK/1/1/7: Denis McKay, “Annual Report, Turkana District, 1939,” 30.

⁶⁷ KNA-DC/TURK/1/1/7: Denis McKay, “Annual Report, Turkana District, 1939,” 2; KNA-DC/LDW/2/13/1: A.L.L. Swann, “Monthly Intelligence Report for March 1939,” 8 April 1939, 1.

Amidst this backdrop of drought, famine, and disease, many of the district's 60,000 residents attempted to flee into neighboring territories. Nomadic pastoralists have always relied on neighboring groups for assistance in times in trouble—and indeed, inter-ethnic cooperativity is so common that it is generally considered to be a defining feature of the nomadic mode of production.⁶⁸ For Turkana families living in the northern and western reaches of the district, this meant attempting to cross international borders and take refuge with Karamojong, Toposa, Dassanech (Turkana name: Merille), and Nyangatom (Turkana name: Donyiro) populations in Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Sudan, and Uganda. And in the south—easily the district's most climatologically imperiled region—this meant crossing Kenyan boundaries and entering the districts of Baringo, Suk, and Samburu to live with Samburu and Pokot (Turkana name: Suk) families. Although frequently in competition with one another, nomadic pastoralists across the Rift Valley had created and sustained mutually beneficial relationships over the course of generations through trade in material goods, and, in times of ecological distress, safe harbor.⁶⁹

However, in 1939, Turkana families were blocked from this generations-old survival strategy by the British colonial administration and members of the King's African Rifles, the

⁶⁸ See, for instance, Paul Spencer, *Nomads in Alliance: Symbiosis and Growth among the Rendille and Samburu of Kenya* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), Paul Spencer, *The Pastoral Continuum: The Marginalization of Tradition in East Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), J. Terrence McCabe, "Patterns and Processes of Group Movement in Human Nomadic Populations: A Case Study of the Turkana of Northwestern Kenya," in *On the Move: How and Why Animals Travel in Groups*, eds. Sue Boinski and Paul A. Garber (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 649-677, and J. Terrence McCabe, *Cattle Bring us to Our Enemies; Ecology, Politics, and Raiding in a Disequilibrium System* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

⁶⁹ See, for instance, Neal Sobania, "Feasts, Famines and Friends: Nineteenth Century Exchange and Ethnicity in the Eastern Lake Turkana Region," in *Herdsmen, Warriors and Traders: Pastoralism in Africa*, eds. John G. Galaty and P. Bonte, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 118-142; and John Lamphear, "Aspects of 'Becoming Turkana: Interactions and Assimilation between Maa- and Ateker-Speakers,'" in *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, eds. Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (London: James Currey, 1993), 87-104.

colonial army that patrolled the international borders in the north and west. The stumbling block: Turkana District was closed district and had been since May 30, 1906.⁷⁰ As was every district that surrounded it. As such, travel to and from each of these bureaucratic divisions was strictly prohibited. The only way a non-resident could enter and move about a district in which they did not live was with the express written permission of the district commissioner of said district. Anyone found to be traveling in territories without permission were subject to removal and to the confiscation of property (i.e. herd animals).⁷¹ And that is to say nothing of travel across international border with Abyssinia, which was strictly prohibited in all circumstances. As a result, throughout 1939, situations such as the one described by A.C.C. Swann, a District Officer in Turkana, were common:

Chief Abong [Ajuga, of the southern Ngibilei section] admitted that Turkana had entered Kapenguria district [West Suk district, capitaled at Kapenguria] owing to famine. He requested that more of his people should follow their example, but this was forbidden and Abong agreed to prevent further trespass, pending the annual baraza with the Suk...

Abong asked if letters could be sent to Marasabit, Maralal, and Baringo requesting permission for the Turkana to enter the districts, as their herds, which had been sadly thinned in 1938, would be threatened with virtual extinction if they remained in southern Turkana, where there was no grazing. It was explained that while Lodwar authorities fully appreciate the seriousness of the situation, the decision rested entirety with the D.C.s of the above districts, and that should they refuse permission, the Turkana would have to return.⁷²

⁷⁰ KNA-PC/RVP/2/5/1: D.R. Crampton, "Appendix to Annual Report for Turkana and Suk Districts, 1918-1919," 2.

⁷¹ The Outlying Districts Ordinance, Cap 104, Laws of Kenya, 1902.

⁷² KNA-DC/LDW/2/13/1: A.C.C. Swann, "Safari Report," 3 July 1939, 2.

With these policies, the British administration had, in essence, created a system that trapped starving people in a tract of land that could not support them.⁷³ Although British district commissioners on all sides of the border were certainly sympathetic to requests for movement into more fertile pastures, the colonial system and its prefectural division did not foster a system in which cooperation across borders was encouraged.⁷⁴ District commissioners were concerned with maintaining peace and stability in their own regions, and frequently denied outside border-crossing requests in order to preserve grazing for their own nomadic populations. Moreover, given the lingering impacts of Britain's cataclysmic stock confiscation during the period of Turkana massive resistance, it is not surprising that many (but certainly not all) families chose to obey the law rather than face the steep penalties imposed by the colonial administration.⁷⁵

This foreclosure of traditional strategies for mitigating the effects of climactic shifts meant that many Turkana families were faced with one of two possible options: move more frequently within the boundaries of their district or die of starvation. Their hand thus forced, Turkana families in the late colonial began a period of staggering nomadism. Whereas Turkana herds had previously relocated, on average, between six to eight times a year, and generally within the geographic areas traditionally occupied by their section, Turkana families were now

⁷³ Indeed, if one looks at the annual rainfall totals in the districts that surround Turkana, one finds averages that, on average, are at least 10 inches higher than those recorded at Lodwar, Lokitaung, and Kaputir.

⁷⁴ Bruce Berman, *Control & Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination* (London: James Currey, 1990), 83.

⁷⁵ The northwestern region of Kenya was one of the last regions in Kenya to be 'pacified' by the British. After years of fighting, the British military successfully crushed Turkana massive resistance with a through a series of stock confiscations that left many families impoverished (and, equally as importantly, replicated traditional notions of defeat in nomadic pastoralist thought). For instance, among the , the British stole 250,000 heads of cattle between then years of 1916 and 1918. John Lamphear has written a fabulous history of these events. See Lamphear, *The Scattering Time*, 1992.

moving across all areas of the district as often as weekly.⁷⁶ For instance, in June, the people administered by Chief Samal Naparum traveled to Loperot and Lokichar—about seventy-five miles from their normal grazing area—because they had heard “there was a little grass and plenty of water.” At the same time, G.G. Kerr, the district officer at Lokitaung, was reporting that “the three [northernmost] sections are still intermingled.”⁷⁷ Wrote McKay in his summary of the year: “So short are the Turkana of grazing that they congregate from all parts of the district to wherever a shower has fallen, so that the grazing is speedily finished within a day or two.”⁷⁸

This chapter examines the effect of this increased mobility on the material objects produced during the late colonial period, a time in which movement restrictions were strictly enforced by the colonizers and largely obeyed by the colonized. Unlike other chapters, my focus, here, is not on a series of discrete and somewhat exceptional objects. Rather, it looks at a broad range of artworks created in the final three decades of Britain’s colonial occupation. It discusses the general stylistic evolution of these Turkana-made materials and attempts to demonstrate a relationship between these formal transformations and the new socio-spatial relationships instantiated by the interaction of British colonial policies and the changing climate. Indeed, I argue that the twin irruptions of colonialism and climate change

⁷⁶ Information on the historic frequency of migrations comes from P.H. Gulliver, *A preliminary survey of the Turkana: A report compiled for the Government of Kenya*, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Communication from the School of African Studies, 1951), 54-55.

⁷⁷ KNA-DC/LDW/2/13/1: A.C.C. Swann, “Safari Report,” 3 July 1939, 1 and KNA-DC/LDW/2/13/1: G.G. Kerr, “Monthly Intelligence Report for June 1939, 7 July 1939, 2.

⁷⁸ KNA-DC/LDW/2/13/1: Denis McKay, “Monthly Intelligence Report for November 1939,” 5 December 1939, 1.

fundamentally altered the aesthetics of the district by rewriting the scripts of nomadic social life in which these works were embedded. As such, it becomes not only possible but necessary to periodize Turkana aesthetic objects; those objects created before British effective occupation in 1926 and those that were created afterwards.

Introducing the Absent Arc

I begin this analysis with two Turkana-made shields: one from the first decade of the twentieth century [Figure 1.1] and one from almost fifty years later [Figure 1.2]. On first glance it is clear that the objects are related one another, almost to the point that a casual, outside viewer might interpret them to be nearly identical. Each, after all, is made from wood and the thick animal hide of either an elephant, rhinoceros, or hippopotamus. Moreover, given their similar size and shape—what could be described as a horned rectangle—each work seems to be a reproduce an *ur* form of sorts, what one might think of as the Platonic ideal of a Turkana shield. However, when the objects are placed side by side they betray radically different understandings of both art and objecthood. The former—the older object— appears to the viewer as a totality, a sculpture that presents a palpable experience of mass to a viewing subject. By using a series of parallel vertical lines to create a frame over which monochromatic, unblemished animal hide is stretched and bound, the unidentified sculptor creates two regularized, rectilinear spaces that cohere into an overall form that is merely a larger version of its constituent parts. The shield, in short, functions metonymically. This similarity and symmetry between part and whole creates what Carl Einstein has called a sculptural totality, that is to say an object that allows viewers to experience its full three-dimensional presence through the visual apprehension of just one particular visual element or the viewing of the object from

single vantage point.⁷⁹ One only needs to examine the reverse of this older shield to see this principle in action [Figure 1.3]. Indeed, the move from recto to verso conveys almost no new information to a viewer. What you see from one vantage point is what you get from every vantage point.

As art historian Joyce Cheng has provocatively argued, by compressing the temporal experience of visual apprehension into a single moment, pre-colonial African sculpture eliminates the requirement of sustained visual contemplation. Meaning arrives, according to Cheng (who, herself, is interpreting Einstein), not over the course of successive moments in which the brain synthesizes discrete elements into a coherent whole, but rather, in an instant.⁸⁰ In Cheng's cited example—that of pre-colonial Baule religious sculpture—the formal elements of the piece in question mean that a penitent did not need to view the sculpture in its entirety in order to experience the divine. A simple glimpse in the firelight of a nighttime ceremony would have sufficed. Such, she argues, is the power of pre-colonial African sculpture. Left unsaid in both Cheng-cum-Einstein's analysis of is that the elimination of visual apprehension places works such as the Baule figurative sculpture or the earlier of the two Turkana shields firmly within a symbolic, representational order, one that understands art as a fundamentally illusionistic or symbolic venture. Artworks created under this logic seek to represent or depict

⁷⁹ Carl Einstein, "Totality," trans. Charles W. Haxthausen *October* 107 (Winter 2004): 115-121 and Carl Einstein, "Negro Sculpture," trans. Sebastian Zeidler and Charles W. Haxthausen *October* 107 (Winter 2004): 122-138. Zeidler has also offered a compelling analysis and interpretation of the Einstein's work, one that helps translate the more impenetrable and inscrutable passages of Einstein work, in Zeidler, "Totality against a Subject: Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik*" *October* 107 (Winter 2004): 14-46

⁸⁰ Joyce Cheng, "Immanence out of Sight: Formal Rigor and Ritual Function in Carl Einstein's 'Negerplastik,'" *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 55/56 (Spring-Autumn 2009): 87-102.

the world (or ideas about it) through the manipulation of visual form. But crucially, these works are not about form itself.

In the case of the unidentified Baule artist who created the sculpture in Cheng's equation, the goal was to create a wooden vessel that would assume the essence of the deity when ritually activated by a priest or priestess. Worshippers were not praying to the sculpture, but rather, to the deity. This, of course, is textbook symbolic communication. The case of the Turkana shield, however, is slightly more complicated than that of its western African cousin. In this case, the goal was not to represent or actualize a deity. Rather, it was more tautological: The artist who made the shield sought to materialize in the best way that he could the Platonic ideal of a Turkana-made shield. Put another way, the shield was meant to signify the essence of what a Turkana shield was meant to be through the repetition of a stable visual form that had been passed down from generation to generation. Indeed, based on formal analysis of extant objects with documented provenance information, it can be said that the formal properties of Turkana-made shields remained relatively stable in the decades prior to 1926; and as such, these objects accumulated a wealth of symbolic meaning. In addition to representing Turkana ethnic identity, they also came to symbolize wealth, authority, and masculinity. So associated were these regularized objects with Turkana men—and specifically with young Turkana men—that the first visual representation of the ethnic group to circulate in the West pictured young Turkana racing down a rocky hill, shield and spear in hand [Figure 1.4].

Contrast this with the second of the two Turkana-made shields. Like its older cousin, this work descends from the formal ideal of a Turkana shield, but crucially, the work features several relatively dramatic changes. Indeed, the unidentified sculptor of the piece has

dramatically modified this ideal form in order to draw the viewer's attention toward the work's shape and materiality. One notices, of course, that the object in question is a Turkana-made shield, but more importantly, one also notices that its form has shifted. Much of this has to do with the object's departure from the traditional rectangular form. In the place of the weighty, consequential mass visualized in both the older shield and in the even-older etching of Turkana shields, the artist gives the viewer relatively airy weightlessness. By replacing the symmetrical verticality of nested rectilinear space with a series of wide, hyperbolic arcs that cut into the boundaries of the object, the work in question makes a statement that is as much about absence as it is about presence. Indeed, an informed viewer—one versed in the history of Turkana art and design—cannot help but see the phantom shape of the historically dominant form when viewing this composition. This absent linearity draws the viewer in and engages them with the work as a unique piece.

Put another way, the concavity of these arcs force a knowledgeable viewer to see this shield, first and foremost, as an object: a thing, a bundle of materials imagined by a creative mind and stitched together in an act of artistic creation. This transformation vitiates the sculptural totality and symbolic logic found in pre-colonial shields and signals the work's allegiance with a more abstract way of conceptualizing the object. For what the work is presenting is not representation of an ideal form—that is to say the replication of the idea of what Turkana shield should be—but rather, what a Turkana shield is on a formal, material level. It is drawing attention not to an alignment and allegiance to tradition, but rather, toward the shield owner's individuality. By making note the formal differences, the object is forcing the viewer to come to terms with it as an individual work of art. One only need toggle between the

object's recto and verso [Figure 1.5] to see this radical departure from the symbolic, representational realm. Whereas the older, Turkana-made shields presented one and only form of itself to their viewers—regardless of their vantage point—an examination of this shield's reverse reveals a viewpoint that bears little resemblance to that which faces forward. Witness this side's further deviation from the ideal of horizontal and vertical parallelism. Note how the left-hand side of the shield seems to contract and curl in on itself. Neither of these are traits observed in shields created not forty years prior. And that, of course, is the point of the sculpture.

On the Aesthetics of Nomads

At this point, however, it seems important to set aside the analytical trajectory of this chapter in order to explain the aesthetic theory that lies behind the above analysis. Put another way, given their status as functional objects, I feel the need to justify the Turkana shields' inclusion within the rarified realm of the 'art.' Pre-colonial African art has long bedeviled Western art historians seeking the find room in the canon for the creative genius found on the world's second largest continent. While some art works—such the bronze and copper castings made for the courts of the Benin and Ife—are easily articulated into Western artistic categories such as portraiture and history paintings, the vast majority of the continent's art works do not align nearly as easily. What is one to make of the figurative handles on spoons made by Dan artists in Liberia or the intricate masks created by Kuba artists in what is today known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo? In general, the rule seems to be that the more figurative the object appears, the more likely it is to be regarded as art. The inverse is true of an object's

functionality. Hence the voluminous (by African art history standards) literature on Kuba masquerade practices and the relative dearth on Dan figurative spoons and heddle pulleys.⁸¹ Yet, these ad hoc and ever-evolving standards have all too frequently left vast swaths of the continent out in the art historical cold. Indeed, as I have noted earlier, were one to populate a map of Africa using only the books, articles, and exhibition catalogs written about the continent's art and architecture, the resulting document would little resemble the land mass we know today. While the western and central portions of the continent would be remarkably detailed, the north and south would be littered with holes. And in the east—well, in the east, there would be almost nothing except a note: 'Here be dragons.'⁸²

Much of this can be explained by the fact that many of the people living in northern, eastern, and southern Africa have historically made their living as nomadic or semi-nomadic stock herders or hunter-gatherers. And as such, their conception of art and aesthetics is far different from that of sedentary societies. Herbert M. Cole is one of the few art historians to have acknowledged this, writing in 1974 that art history must understand that the mobility of nomadic societies forecloses opportunities for monumental sculpture or other types of symbolic, non-functional art works.⁸³ Creating objects such as the masks and devotional sculpture found throughout West and Central Africa would not only be foolish, but would potentially endanger the lives of both the herd animals responsible for carrying these works as

⁸¹ The Center for African Art's *ART/Artifact* exhibition is, of course, one of the definitive explorations of African object's tenuous and shifting relationship with the idea of 'art.' See *ART/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections* (New York: Center for African Art, 1988).

⁸² Kevin Tervalá, "BOOK REVIEW: Shangaa: Art of Tanzania," *African Arts* 49, no. 2 (2016): 91.

⁸³ Herbert M. Cole, "The Vital Arts in Northern Kenya," *African Arts* 7, no. 2 (1974): 12-23+82.

well as those of the people who relied on these animals for their life-sustaining blood, milk, and meat. As a result, all objects—artistic or otherwise—had to be lightweight, portable, and engineered for life-on-the-move. Cole’s argument revolved primarily around fashion and adornment. It was in these “vital arts,” as he termed them, that one could find the ‘art’ in nomadic societies.

I build on Cole’s incisive and all-too-frequently-overlooked intervention and add the following proposition: In nomadic societies there is no pure aesthetic object, no art for art’s sake, no single avenue for artistic creativity. Rather than channeling the aesthetic impulse into a few types of objects, nomadic aesthetics is diffuse. In a world where everything is used and life is spent constantly in pursuit of the next grazing pasture or watering hole, there is, in a very real sense, a little bit of art in everything. Given these facts of daily life, the differentiation that exists between ‘art’ and ‘craft’ in Western society must be understood to be meaningless in a nomadic context. As such, an art history of nomadic populations must necessarily include objects ranging from shields to bowls, from dolls to earrings, and from hairstyles to textiles.

The danger, of course, when one attempts to discuss the aesthetics of functional objects such as those produced by Turkana pastoralists is that the analyst will fall for the all-too-simplistic allure of the ‘form follows function’ argument. And while there is certainly nothing wrong—or even inaccurate—about this method of understanding material objects, it is ill suited to the task placed at the feet of most art historians. Indeed, for a discipline grounded in ideas of creativity, innovation, and aesthetics, the privileging of functional explanations strikes a discordant note—at least to me. Of course, given the functionality of many canonical objects of African art, Africanist art history is rife with forms of analysis I have just described. Even Cole,

as prescient as I believe he was, nevertheless succumbed to this mode of analysis in his discussion of Pokot, Samburu, and Turkana body art. After articulating his beliefs in the fundamental differences in nomadic aesthetic theory, he concluded by arguing that the differentiation in the hairstyles and body pigmentation of northern Kenya's pastoralists was largely due to the need to quickly and easily apprehend an individual's social identity (e.g. ethnic identity, seniority, marital status, etc.) in the mercurial and highly mobile land of inland, eastern Africa.⁸⁴ And while I certainly do not disagree with Cole's analysis, it represents only one part of the equation. Explanations for why things look the way they do are rarely this cut and dry.

Take the previously discussed Turkana-made shields. Approached from a functionalist perspective, the formal qualities of these objects can be understood not as a manifestation of aesthetic concerns, but rather, as a reflection of district's shifting socio-political affairs. Such an argument would go as follows: Historically—that is to say in the days prior to British effective occupation in 1926—shields such as these would have been used by young Turkana men during stock raids of neighboring groups. These raids—which were conducted as a way of increasing a family's herd numbers, and thus their wealth—were fought at relatively close range and, as such, Turkana artists developed a range of offensive and defensive weaponry designed to be used in what oftentimes ended up being hand-to-hand combat.⁸⁵ Turkana men used iron

⁸⁴ Cole, "Vital Arts in Northern Kenya," 23. Hodder makes a similar argument in Ian Hodder, *Symbols in Action: Ethnoarchaeological Studies of Material Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁸⁵ Roy Larick, in a series of superbly researched articles, has discussed the transformation of Samburu spear shape during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and noted that Turkana, more so than other Nilotic-speaking ethnic groups in Kenya, used spears at a distance. The spear was designed to fly through the air, as opposed to being used in hand-to-hand combat. Nevertheless, given the above-cited historical records it is important to recognize that there is a fundamental difference between ideal and actual military strategy. See Roy Larick, "Age Grading and

spears, wristknives, and fingerknives to inflict damage, while shields allowed them to block an opponent's parries while simultaneously delivering blows with these blunt, large, and relatively heavy objects.⁸⁶ Given the particularities of this military strategy, the pre-colonial shape of these shields makes sense. The weightiness and emphasis on the rectangular form can be understood as having emerged from the particularities of battle in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The same can be said of these objects' transformation in the first half of the twentieth century, a time period in which the conjoined twins of colonialism and capitalism brought massive changes to the socio-political structure of the region. After quelling the region's violent and particularly bloody resistance to colonial rule, the British colonial administration turned its attention toward stamping out the time-honored tradition of inter-ethnic stock raiding, seeing the acts as threats to regional stability and, given the independent state of Abyssinia just across the northern border of Turkana District, to its own international relations.⁸⁷ Though marginally less brutal than their earlier efforts to effectively occupy the region, the British quest to stop raiding practices were harsh and the penalties for raiding involved either heavy fines or long jail sentences. As a result, Turkana shield-use rapidly declined throughout the post-1926 period.

The spread of rifles throughout the district only exacerbated this situation. Although these

Ethnicity in the Style of Loikop (Samburu) Spears." *World Archaeology* 18 (1986): 269-283 and Roy Larick, "Warriors and Blacksmiths: Mediating Ethnicity in East African Spears," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 10 (1991): 299-331

⁸⁶ Archival references to Turkana warfare are too numerous to list in their entirety. However, some of the earliest and most descriptive are: KNA-DC/TURK/3/1: H.B. Kittermaster, "History of the Turkana," January 1911, 4-5; KNA-DC/TURK/3/1: D.E. Emley, "Notes on the Tukana," 1926 or 1927, 68-69; KNA-DC/TURK/3/1: "Handing Over Report, 1 May 1926," 23-25.

⁸⁷ John Lamphear has written a stunningly detailed and well-researched historical account of Turkana resistance to British colonialism in the early years of the twentieth century. See Lamphear, *The Scattering Time*, 1992.

weapons had been circulating in the territory since mid-to-late nineteenth century Swahili merchants began to trade them in return for assistance in tracking elephants and rhinoceroses, it was not until the days of Turkana massive resistance that men in northwestern Kenya actively began to seek them out.⁸⁸ And though they were acquired for use primarily in these battles, once acquired, they were quickly put to use in the furtive and surreptitious stock raids that continued throughout the colonial period—and continue to this day.

Given these changes, the formal deviations in Turkana-made shields make a certain amount of functional sense. As the era of Pax Britannica wore on, shields became less and less useful as armed conflict became more and more rare. Moreover, in those few-and-far-between situations when an individual would have required defensive protection, shields such as these were likely to provide very little of it. Hippopotamus hide, after all, will protect you from an iron spear, but it is likely to do very little against a bullet. Shield makers were thus free to deviate from established formal norms that had been in place since the beginning of the ethnic group's rigid pastoral specialization in the eighteenth century.

Arcs, Arcs, Everywhere

It would be a mistake, however, to attribute too much influence to socio-political explanations. For while these factors undoubtedly played a role in the formal transformation seen in Turkana-made shields, they are, simply one part of the equation. Indeed, while the above socio-historical exegesis explains why these changes were allowed to happen, it does not explain what about the changes made them attractive to Turkana artists, or even why the artists

⁸⁸ See Imperato, *Quest for the Jade Sea*, 1998 and Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World*, 2008.

thought of them in the first place. Nor do social or political considerations fully explain why these new works were objects of desire for the consumers who obtained them through trade or, in a very few circumstances, purchase. More importantly still, while the socio-politics of Turkana District might explain the changes seen in these most exceptional of Turkana-made art objects, but they do little to unpack similar changes that occurred throughout the Turkana sculptural canon in the late colonial period. For that, we must turn to the environmental changes in the district, the ways in which the colonial administration's policies exacerbated its effects, and the effects of both on the mental state of the people who had to contend with both.

Indeed, formal transformations such as this one seen in the previously discussed shields took place throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. Indeed, the work cared for by The Baltimore Museum of Art must not be understood as an example of poor technical construction, but rather, as part of the larger stylistic transition that can be seen across late colonial period. For this, I turn my attention to Turkana-made bowls (plural: *ngatubwai*; singular: *atubwa*). These objects are perhaps as far removed from Turkana-made shields as any object in the district could be. Unlike shields—which are singular, exceptional objects, made for and possessed solely by men of a certain age— *ngatubwai* are made almost exclusively by women and are used by all members of a family, from senior male elders down to the smallest of female children.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Although women were traditionally the individuals who sculpted the vast majority of *ngatubwai*, there is not a clear gendered division of labor when it comes to their production. Men were both allowed to and did create these objects. However, like most nomadic cultures in northern and eastern Africa, Turkana women were responsible for all things related to the home—from its planning and construction to the food preparation that occurred within it.

Like bowls the world over, their purpose is simple—to hold food prior to its consumption. As such, a typical Turkana family would have owned several of these home-made objects and they would have been transported from location to location until they became so damaged that they no longer served their intended purpose. In general, these objects are sculpted from the wood of the ant-resistant *Adomi* tree and designed with the uneven sand, dirt, or rocky floor of the Turkana household in mind. The round bottoms, for instance, keep the object from tipping over, and most importantly, they are defined not by circular openings, such as seen in bowls in the West and much of the East, but rather, by that of a stylized rectangle.⁹⁰ Indeed, as Alan Donovan has noted in the first and, to-date, only peer-reviewed article on the formal qualities of Turkana artistic production, the rims of these rectangular bowls all curved inward—theoretically, in order to prevent spillage.⁹¹ Here, comparisons become important. For in spite of the differences in use, value, and creator, the life-histories of Turkana-made shields Turkana-made bowls are strikingly similar. Both begin the twentieth century as objects that are fundamentally defined by their rectilinear shapes and both end their aesthetic journey in the mid part of the twentieth century as objects that are much more stylized.

Compare the two *ngatubwai* housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The earlier of the two works [Figure 1.6] is thought to be the oldest Turkana object in the museum's collection, a judgement made both on the date in which it entered the collection as well as by the wear and tear evidenced on the object's surface. To that list I add the relatively shallow curvature seen on the vertical rim of the bowl. Although tilted ever-so-slightly inward, the

⁹⁰ Alan Donovan, "Turkana Functional Art," *African Arts* 21, no. 3 (1988): 46.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

vertical lips of this bowl remain relatively straight and any rim is almost imperceptible. Moreover, the horizontal rims of the bowl face directly skywards. Instead of curving these sides, the unidentified artist who produced this work decided instead to prevent spillage by allowing these two sides to rise visibly—by over a quarter inch—above the vertical sides of the sculpture. This gives the bowl a negative space that is largely rectangular in nature.

However, like its cousin the shield, objects types like *ngatubwai* transformed so fundamentally over the course of the pre-colonial period that by the time Donovan was conducting research in the late 1960s and early 1970s, his fieldwork observations were consistent enough for him to declare that all *ngatubwai* were defined by noticeably curved rims. What was, at the beginning of twentieth century, just a slight curve in the vertical rims of the objects had transformed into an ever-increasingly noticeable hyperbolic curve. Look now, at the second of the two *ngatubwai* mentioned [Figure 1.7]. Note how the inward curvature on all sides has increased dramatically. More importantly, though, compare the negative space of a Turkana-made bowl from the middle part of the twentieth century to the Turkana-made shield created during the same time period.

On first glance, the resemblance between the two can seem superficial. One immediately notices the similarities in color, the browns that are so common among artistic works made from organic material. Look longer, though, and structural similarities will start to emerge. Both are defined by curving, rectilinear space, whether it be positive space in the case of the shield or negative space in the case of the *atubwa*. Yet, these rectangles are not the brutish boring shapes that you and I are used to. Rather, they are gentle, stylized. The sculptors of these objects have modulated the hard lines of the rectangular shape through wide parabolic

arcs that cut into the straight side lines. The formal resonance between the two is almost uncanny. Notice how the positive space of the shield mirrors almost perfectly the negative space of the bowl. Were the former object smaller, it would fit almost perfectly within negative space of the latter.

On the *Kunstwollen* of Late Colonial Turkana

After examining the formal properties of nearly two hundred Turkana-made art objects—some made prior to the imposition of British civil administration and some made after—what emerges is a general trend: Objects created prior to British effective occupation are relatively rectangular in shape whereas those created after that 1926 event are likely to be defined by the arcing parabolic absence described above. This assessment transcends divisions based on gender, status, and object type. In the late colonial period, one sees this shape emerge in shields, bowls, milk containers (*akarum*) [Figures 1.8 and 1.9], and fat containers (*eburi*) [Figures 1.10 and 1.11]. Any sculptural work produced in the district during this time period seems to be defined by this general shape.

Thankfully, I am not the first scholar to note this striking affinity of form between objects such as these, even if I am the first to historicize its development. The anthropologist Donna Pido has called the hyperbolic concavity found throughout the Turkana sculptural canon the “Turkana love of conic sections” and observed that, “For reasons even the Turkana have not yet explained, they form much of their material world using hyperbolic paraboloids and

hyperboloids.”⁹² Yet, as she also noted, “The Turkana romance with conic section remains a mystery for further study.”⁹³ Some scholars have speculated that these forms reference the human torso, but these assertions were perfunctory and made in passing.⁹⁴ This chapter seeks to both historicize this artistic phenomenon and provide an answer to Pido’s implicit question.

My argument, as I hope I have now made clear, is that these arcs are caused, in some small way, by the increased mobility seen in the late colonial period. They are, I argue, the fundamental aesthetic unit in late colonial Turkana. They are ubiquitous across this Turkana artistic canon—and it is that ubiquity that allows us to unlock the *Kunstwollen* of the era. “

The basic unit of art history [that] Riegl proposed,” Christopher S. Wood has written, “is not the work of art, but the drive to make art, the ineradicable impulse to design and figuration.”⁹⁵ Riegl called this drive *Kunstwollen*, writing that “In every period there is only *one* orientation of the *Kunstwollen*...The plastic *Kunstwollen* regulates man’s relationship to the sensorially perceptible appearance of things.”⁹⁶ And though Riegl’s project was essentializing and nationalist in its rhetoric, his approach is particularly appropriate to a study of nomadic

⁹² Donna Klumpp Pido, “Considering Indigenous Design Paradigms in Education and Practice,” unpublished paper delivered at Art, Design, Education: Exchange with Africa symposium at University of Art and Design, Helsinki, 14 and 15 June 2001.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Günter Best, *Marakwet & Turkana: Neue Einblicke in die materielle Kultur ostafrikanischer Gesellschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Völkerkunde, 1993), 56.

⁹⁵ Christopher S. Wood, “Introduction,” in *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, ed. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 2000), 26.

⁹⁶ Alois Riegl, “The Main Characteristics of the Late Roman *Kunstwollen* (1901),” trans. Christopher S. Wood, in *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, ed. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 2000), 94-95.

aesthetics in an age of movement restriction. After all, ethnicity in inland, eastern Africa was, in many ways, created by the colonial system of “tribal reserves” and closed districts.⁹⁷ Trapped in the district by the colonial administration and forced by the climate to travel more widely, the men and women of northwestern Kenya interacted with one another far more in the late colonial period than ever before. It thus becomes both possible and necessary to discuss a unified “Turkana style” during this time period. More importantly still, as Vigdis Broch-Due has so eloquently argued, the Turkana material world is defined by “embodied artifacts that serve as signs for the social relationships created by their use and transfer.”⁹⁸ As such, it only follows that the formal transformation of Turkana-made materials over the course of the late colonial period would find their origins in the shifting social realities instigated by the twin irruptions of climate change and colonialism.

Indeed, I argue that the increasing mobility instantiated by these two forces transformed northwestern Kenya into a hostile, precarious, and unstable environment for the tens of thousands of Turkana men, women, and children. Forced to leave the lands on which their herds had traditionally grazed, many Turkana men and women began to enter new areas of the district for the very first time. And they were doing so not out of desire, but out of necessity. Legally barred from leaving the district, they were forced to travel to new areas in a desperate attempt to find the more water, more graze, more browse. In northwestern Kenya

⁹⁷ See, for instance, Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211-262; and Thomas Spear and Richard Waller, eds., *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, eds. Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (London: James Currey, 1993).

⁹⁸ Vigdis Broch-Due, “The Bodies within the Body: Journeys within Turkana Thought and Practice” (PhD diss, University of Bergen, 1990), 64.

movement in the land “contains a spatial history, a calendar of memorable events to past generations of people and cattle inscribed in the paths through the landscape.”⁹⁹ By venturing off of their traditional paths—the locations they had been taught to understand and read since childhood—these Turkana men and women had, in essence, become refugees in the place that the colonial government had declared was their home.

The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has defined place as a location that has been created by human experience; whereas space is a location devoid of human dominance, of human cultural investment. “Space,” he writes, “is freedom. Place is security.”¹⁰⁰ The architectural historian Labelle Prussin has used these differentiations to persuasively argue that nomadic architectural expression is fundamentally about a desire to create places—no matter how temporary—in the midst of a land full of space.¹⁰¹ I build on Prussin’s analysis here: first, by temporalizing it, and wresting it out of the anthropological present; and second, by arguing that the same principle can apply to the non-architectural objects. Indeed, I argue that the insistence on the physicality and individuality of these Turkana-made objects is rooted in the displacement and increasing mobility of the age. Given the environmental and social precarity faced by these men and women, this transition toward an aesthetic of objecthood can and should be interpreted as an attempt to ground oneself in a material world. Unmoored from the paths—both literal and

⁹⁹ Vigdis Broch-Due, “A Proper Cultivation of Peoples: The Colonial Configuration of Pastoral Tribes and Places in Kenya,” in *Producing Nature and Poverty in Africa*, eds, Vigdis Broch-Due and Richard Schroeder (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000), 65.

¹⁰⁰ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 3.

¹⁰¹ Labelle Prussin, *African Nomadic Architecture: Space, Place, and Gender* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 42-43.

metaphoric—that had given their lives meaning, Turkana men and women of the late colonial period took refuge in the only unchanging things they had: the physical objects that they themselves had created.

On Architecture and Ornament

This argument finds further aesthetic support in ornamental regime of late colonial Turkana. Indeed, when one compares the array of Turkana-made containers from the late colonial period to those from earlier periods, what stands out immediately is the presence of decorative marks that are engraved, oftentimes using pyrography, onto the surface of these works. Unlike early colonial objects—which, like the previously discussed shields, are defined by largely unblemished brown surfaces [Figure 1.12]—Turkana-made containers from the late colonial period are covered with orderly rows of concentric circles [Figure 1.13] or large or evenly-spaced burn marks [Figure 1.14]. Moreover, as the twentieth century progresses, the color palette found on these Turkana-made containers shifts rather dramatically. While earlier objects attempted to maintain a uniformity of surface color by matching hide color with wood color [Figure 1.15], works from the late colonial period are intentionally heterogenous. Either through pigment or pyrography, these later works use two differing colors—most frequently red and black or black and brown—to create additional patterns on the surface of vessels.

Lydia Gatundu has argued that these decorative marks have no iconographic meaning and are incorporated solely to increase the beauty of each object.¹⁰² And indeed, contemporary Turkana women frequently hang their containers on the interior of family compounds in order

¹⁰² Gatundu, “An Ethnographic Investigation of Turkana Kitchen Art,” 57-58.

“to uplift the woman’s status in the community.”¹⁰³ They also report that specific marks are highly individualized and can be understood as an artist’s mark or signature. There is, thus, much to recommend Gatundu’s thesis. And regardless of whether or not there is meaning embedded these forms, their mere presence supports my larger thesis that, in the late colonial period, Turkana-made artworks began to transition from a symbolic, representational realm into a material one in the late colonial period.

Nevertheless, in spite of Gatundu’s work, I am skeptical that these marks have no meaning whatsoever. After all, they emerged in a particular time and in a particular place. Moreover, a closer comparison between the late colonial works that are the subject of this chapter and those found on post-independence Turkana containers points to a considerable shift in aesthetic sensibilities. What was once round is now rectangular. Concentric circles have become grids (or meshes, to use her term).¹⁰⁴ And ovular pyrographic marks—what I called the “fingerprint” mark in my notes—have transformed themselves into squares. There is something, it seems, to these marks after all. For if they were completely meaningless then their formal evolution would not be so uniform.

It is my contention this formal transformation is related to the shifting housing patterns of the twentieth century. There is, it seems, an uncanny relationship between these marks and the architectural layout of a typical Turkana home, whether it be in the early or late twentieth

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 55. This, of course, is reminiscent of the ways in which women in northeastern Nigeria and southwestern Chad display incised gourds on the exterior of their homes in order to broadcast economic status. See Marla Berns, *The Essential Gourd: Art and History in Northeastern Nigeria* (Los Angeles: UCLA Museum of Cultural History, 1986).

¹⁰⁴ Gatundu, “An Ethnographic Investigation of Turkana Kitchen Art,” 50-53.

century. Take the late colonial period, for instance. The time in which the ovular and concentric circles emerged is also the time in which a vast majority of Turkana men and women were living in traditional *ngawi* (sing. *awi*), a homestead structure defined by its ovular shape and its layers of concentric circles. As shown in an architectural diagram from 1927 [Figure 1.16], each *awi* is defined by an ovular outer perimeter, the interior of which features smaller circular enclosures for animals, as well as structures meant for sleeping (*akai*) and conducting day time activities (*ekal*).¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, in the late twentieth century, when many Turkana men and women had shifted to living in homes laid out in a grid pattern, the decorative marks found on Turkana containers tend to resemble grids.¹⁰⁶

Perhaps I am reading too much into these marks. However, if the ornamentation found on Turkana material culture is indeed related to architectural expression, then it becomes possible to read a whole host of information into these marks. Indeed, beginning with Suzanne Preston Blier's pioneering examination of Batammaliba two-story houses, Africanist architectural historians have shown time and time again that there is a strong relationship between the way that a society thinks and the ways that it chooses to structure its built environment.¹⁰⁷ I build on the work of these scholars to argue that the emergence of architecturally-linked ornamentation in the late colonial period is linked to the displacement

¹⁰⁵ E.D. Emley, "The Turkana of Kolosia District," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 57 (1927): 167-169. See also Kyalo Adamson, "The Transformation of Turkana Traditional Architecture," (BA Thesis, University of Nairobi, 2015), 29-42.

¹⁰⁶ Adamson, "The Transformation of Turkana Traditional Architecture," 86-89.

¹⁰⁷ Suzanne Preston Blier, *The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architectural Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). See also Nelson, *From Cameroon to Paris*, 2007, and, more recently, Prita Meier, *Swahili Port Cities: The Architecture of Elsewhere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016) and Michelle Aptosos, *Architecture, Islam, and Identity in West Africa: Lessons from Larabanga* (New York: Routledge, 2016)

experienced by the climate refugees of the district. More specifically still, I argue that this ornamentation reflects a desire to return to a previous time, a time when these refugees traveled familiar paths, cared for their herds in familiar pastures, and were able to build traditional structures.

Steven Nelson has written that, “To experience exile is to retain, in the words of Thomas Pavel, “[a] faith in the possibility of homecoming.”¹⁰⁸ And it is that exact faith that I believe is being represented through these marks. Note, for instance, not only how the concentric circles reflect the architectural structure of the *awi*, but also how they seem to cluster along an edge or a line, whether that be the lip of a container or around the hide/leather carrying straps that are attached to the containers [Figures 1.17 and 1.18]. Although more research is needed to confirm this hypothesis, I believe that it is possible that this placement reflects the location of *ngawi* along well-trod paths (*erot*).

Conclusion

At the end of his tenure as District Commissioner of Southern Turkana, Rowland Baker-Beall recounted that, over the course, of his nineteen months on the district, elderly men and women began to speak more and more of “the good old days.”¹⁰⁹ And, of course, given the cataclysmic changes that they had been forced to endure, that only make sense. In this chapter I have shown how the interaction between British colonial land policies and the changing

¹⁰⁸ Rotimi Fani-Kayode, “Traces of Ecstasy,” in *Rotimi Fani-Kayode & Alex Hirst, Photographs*, eds. Mark Sealy and John Loup Pivin (London: Éditions Revue Noire and Autograph, 1996), 5; Steven Nelson, “Transgressive Transcendence in the Photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode,” *Art Journal* 64, no. 1 (2005): 4.

¹⁰⁹ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, “Appendix IV: A Consideration of the Economic Condition of the Ngiturkana especially in relation to their ability to pay Hut-Tax,” in “Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1932,” 9.

climate instigated a series of wide-spread disruptions that, one, forced Turkana families off of their traditional grazing pastures and into new and unfamiliar territory, and two, necessitated far more frequent movement. These disruptions, I have argued, effectively transformed the vast majority of Turkana men and women into climate refugees, a material and ontological disruption was so profound that it, in turn, irrevocably altered the formal properties of Turkana-made artworks. Seen most clearly in the emergence of parabolic outlines and architecturally-inspired ornamentation, each of these formal transformations speak to this refugee status, either by reflecting present needs (as in the case of the arcs) or a desire to return to the past (as in the case of the architecturally-inspired ornamentation).

WHEN NOMADS SETTLE: Disaster and Desire on Lake Rudolf (Turkana)

In May 1961, at the twilight of British colonial occupation, nearly five hundred desperate men, women, and children straggled into Lodwar, the administrative headquarters of Turkana District.¹¹⁰ Starving and stock-less, each of these individuals was what the colonial administration would call a “pauper,” or “*maskini*” in Kiswahili. They had lost the entirety of their herds in the drought and famine of 1960/61—the worst since 1952—and had exhausted those consanguineal, affinal, and sectional relationships that could have provided them with assistance in times of need.¹¹¹ Legally barred from leaving the district by the colonial government and with nothing to sell or barter, each was facing imminent death. The die thus cast; they made the long trek to Lodwar in order to appeal to the colonizers for assistance.

Upon arrival, these men, women, and children were given a ration of “famine posho”—a cornmeal porridge (i.e. ugali) imported by the government from down-country—and put on trucks headed for Ferguson’s Gulf, a settlement not forty miles from Lodwar. Located on the shores of a small inlet of Lake Rudolf (Turkana), Ferguson’s Gulf had been founded during the 1932/34 drought as a way of “relieving Government...of the financial embarrassment of providing maize meal, valued at Shs./28- to Shs./30- a bag.”¹¹² Instead of providing food to the paupers directly, the administration sent those made destitute by their policies to the shores of

¹¹⁰ KNA-DC/LDW/2/1/60: M.J. Thompson, “Safari Report – Ferguson’s Gulf,” 15 May 1961, 1.

¹¹¹ U. Patel, an Indian merchant who ran one some of the only stores (dukas) in the district, quoted in KNA-DC/LDW/2/1/60: T.W. Pike, “Safari Report, 26.8.1960 – 17.9.1960,” 4 November 1960, 4.

¹¹² KNA-PC/RVP/3/2/2: Arthur M. Champion, “Handing Over Report, Turkana Province,” 13 November 1934, 9.

the world's largest desert lake, a body of water that's highly-alkaline waters are technically potable.

Once there, administrators hoped that these men, women, and children would learn to provide for themselves by learning how to catch, eat, and sell fish. To that end, in 1936, the colonial administration purchased two flat-bottomed metal boats, two gill nets, and a long line for use in the inlet. They also hired Pangrassio, "an imperturbable Luo," to lead the activities of the community and teach the refugees how to fish.¹¹³ A district officer serving in the late 1940s summarized the situation as follows: "Unless means are found to grow sufficient food locally and to set aside stocks of food for use in bad seasons, famines are bound to appear from time to time. The pauper's camp at Ferguson's Gulf must be accepted as a permanent institution. It is the cone of famine relief. " ¹¹⁴

Famine relief settlements such as the one at Ferguson's Gulf were a staple of the late colonial administration in Turkana. The first—a temporary camp housing a dozen women and children at Kalokol—was erected in 1926, the very first year of the region's civil administration. And by the time the 1961 refugees reached Ferguson's Gulf, it was reported that 30,000 Turkana men, women, and children were living in some form of semi-permanent settlement administered by the colonial administration as a means of famine relief.¹¹⁵ The vast majority of these were inland—only two lakeshore fishing camps existed in 1951.¹¹⁶ But over the course of

¹¹³ KNA-DC/TURK/1/1/7: H.G. Gregory-Smith, "Annual Report for Turkana District, 1941," 2.

¹¹⁴ KNA-DC/TURK/1/1/8: P. Chrichton, "Annual Report for Turkana District, 1949," 13.

¹¹⁵ For reference to first famine relief camp, see: KNA-DC/LDW/2/7/1 For reference to the number of individuals living in famine relief camps, see: Arthur Hopcraft, *Born to Hunger* (London: Pan Books, 1968), 46.

¹¹⁶ Gulliver, *A Preliminary Survey of the Turkana*, 33.

the 1950s and 1960s, nearly 12,000 were thought to have been resettled along the shores of Lake Rudolf (Turkana).¹¹⁷

At Ferguson's Gulf, the oldest of these lakeside camps, the population had swelled from fifty in the early 1930s to nine-hundred thirteen in 1961.¹¹⁸ Less a reflection on the community's success in generating a sustainable alternative to nomadic pastoralism and more a sign of the increasing desperation felt throughout the district, the 1961 settlement housed men, women, and children from almost every section in the northern and central regions district—some of whom had traveled over a hundred miles to reach the lake.¹¹⁹ Of course, being formerly nomadic stock herders, none of these individuals could fish.¹²⁰ Moreover, at that time, the fishers at the camp (i.e. Pangrassio and his assistants) were only producing enough fish to feed about twenty-five percent of the population. Accordingly, each family was issued a ration card that entitled them to a pound of posho a day and a plot of land measuring fifty by one hundred feet.¹²¹ In exchange, they were required to spend their days making rough string

¹¹⁷ Jeppe Kolding, "The fish resources of Lake Turkana and their environment" (PhD diss, University of Bergen, 1989), 156. The vast majority of these camps were started in the 1950s and early 1960s.

¹¹⁸ KNA-DC/LDW/2/1/60: Thomas D. Preston, "Safari Report – Lokwakangola to Ferguson's Gulf, 3.6.1961 to 10.6.1961," 4 June 1961, 3.

¹¹⁹ I reference here, a family of seven from Chief Emanā's Ngamatak section, that are listed in the census records for Ferguson's Gulf. These records are organized by Chief and can be found attached to KNA-DC/LDW/2/1/60: Thomas D. Preston, "Safari Report – Lokwakangola to Ferguson's Gulf, 3.6.1961 to 10.6.1961," 4 June 1961. By matching the chiefs to their individual sections via issues of *The Kenya Gazette* one can extrapolate where families lived.

¹²⁰ KNA-DC/LDW/2/1/60: Thomas D. Preston, "Safari Report – Lokwakangola to Ferguson's Gulf, 3.6.1961 to 10.6.1961," 4 June 1961, 1.

¹²¹ KNA-DC/LDW/2/1/60: Thomas D. Preston, "Safari Report – Lokwakangola to Ferguson's Gulf, 3.6.1961 to 10.6.1961," 4 June 1961, 1.

out of dome palms leaves for use as thatching twine by British administrators.¹²² It was here that these families stayed—oftentimes for a generation or more. Indeed, when colonial administrators undertook a census of the Ferguson’s Gulf in 1961, they found teenagers, aged sixteen or seventeen, who claimed to have been born at the camp.¹²³

Flux and Indeterminacy in the Art History of Colonial Africa

This chapter examines the effects of this long-lasting sedenterization on the creativity and artistic production of these formerly nomadic pastoralists. Using a cache of art objects that—through careful provenance research—I have been able to link to two famine relief camps on Lake Rudolf (Turkana), I examine what happens when an individual artist’s lifestyle changes to such an extent that it can be said that the mode of production in which they operate has fundamentally transformed. What types of artworks does this person create? Do these works align—in both form and function—with the objects the individual would have created in a previous life? Or do they differ entirely? Equally as important, why are these objects being created? Are they being created as a way of re-enacting the social scripts embedded in a former life? Or are they sculpted to speak to the individual’s new and fundamentally altered life? In short, what happens to artistic form and creativity when nomads settle?

A short answer to almost all of these inquiries is: Yes. The artworks produced by these climate refugees on the lake are profoundly liminal pieces. Like the people who made them, they are caught in between two worlds: a nomadic past and a sedentary present; a pastoralist

¹²² KNA-DC/TURK/1/1/8: L.E. Whitehouse, “Annual Report for Turkana District, 1953,” 13.

¹²³ KNA-DC/LDW/2/1/60: M.J. Thompson, “Safari Report – Ferguson’s Gulf,” 15 May 1961, 1.

ontology and a capitalist reality. Unable to cohere in either, they float in between, caught in a generations-long battle between two cultures, lifestyles, and modes of production. These are strange works, objects that reflect the signs and symbols of two 'dominant' cultures struggling for dominance in a land that was increasingly hostile to both. Understanding these objects thus requires us to move away from the dialectical models of colonial art making that presume a dominant colonizer and subjugated colonized. These works are more than just reflections of colonial 'intervention' or changing 'tradition.'¹²⁴ They are far from mere stops on the teleological train of capitalist modernity.

Rather, if these objects reflect anything, it is the flux and indeterminacy of both the moment and the region. The inability of the British colonial system to fully and permanently take hold in this a volatile, arid, and desiccating land meant that the push and pull between the sedentary capitalism and nomadic pastoralism would continue unabated throughout the late colonial period. Indeed, even in the twenty-first century era, a great number of the one million residents of Turkana County still practice some form of nomadic pastoralism.¹²⁵ Like the objects that would be created in the post-independence era—baskets made for international market being the primary example—these objects bear marks of this great 'clash of cultures' in their

¹²⁴ In many ways, this chapter is a response to Labelle Prussin's essay "When Nomads Settle." Prussin, who did fieldwork with settled Gabra communities in the late 1980s and early 1990s, proposed that nomadic settlement instigated series of dramatic shifts in architectural form and its attendant ontological and socio-cultural realities. And while I would never propose to discount this work, I would, however, offer a more tempered approach, one that recognizes the messiness of settled nomadic life. See Prussin, "When Nomads Settle: Changing Technologies of Building and Transport and the Production of Architectural Form among the Gabra, the Rendille, and the Somalis," in *African Material Culture*, eds. Mary Jo Arnoldi, Christraud M. Geary, and Kris L. Hardin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 93-98.

¹²⁵ Following Rada and Neville Dyson-Hudson, I do not make a distinction between semi-nomadic pastoralism and nomadic pastoralism. As they correctly point out, the term "nomadic pastoralism," even when distinguished from "semi-nomadic pastoralism," does not imply constant, unceasing movement. See Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson, "Nomadic Pastoralism," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 9 (1980): 19.

novel formal properties. This chapter argues that this liminality is most visually obvious in the artworks produced by the district's settled refugees.

At the heart of this inquiry are three Turkana-made shields collected in 1947 by the American Museum of Natural History's Morden Expedition.¹²⁶ The first [Figure 2.1] is an older work, one that was purchased from an elderly man in the final days of the expedition's four month stay in the district. Up until that point, Kepler Lewis, the anthropologist hired by AMNH, "had not turned up a good hide shield," but with the assistance of a Tribal Police officer named Loichamba, he was able to discover "a fine old example."¹²⁷ Hidden from colonial-authorities during the era weaponry confiscation, it is representative of the late 19th and early 20th century tradition of shield-making discussed in Chapter One. Indeed, given the seller's age—around sixty—and its classic, rectilinear shape, we can speculate that it was produced no later than the first decade of the twentieth century. After all, objects such as this one, are traditionally given to men upon their entry into manhood, which happens around the age of twenty.¹²⁸

Given their relative rarity, Lewis was quite excited about this acquisition. Shields were, in his view, some of the most intriguing and dynamic objects in the region. However, up until September 3, 1947 (the date this older example was acquired) he had only managed to find and collect two, both of which were purchased in or around famine camps: one coming from the

¹²⁶ Initiated by that museum as a way of bolstering their collection of eastern African objects, Turkana District was chosen both for its remoteness (i.e. it was less 'spoiled' by modernity), as well as its relative lack of academic scholarship.¹²⁶ As such, the expedition's anthropologist, Kepler Lewis, was aggressive in his collecting practices, purchasing or, in some small cases, bartering for 170 objects, all of which are now in the collection of AMNH.

¹²⁷ AMNH-Rare Book Collection/42F/Box 3: Kepler Lewis, "Journal of a Safari in Turkana: The Morden Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History," 303-304.

¹²⁸ P.H. Gulliver, "The Turkana Age Organization," *American Anthropologist* 60, no. 5 (1958): 901; Gulliver, *A Preliminary Survey of the Turkana*, 192

lakeside Ferguson's Gulf and one near the famine camp established near Lodwar.¹²⁹ And both of these objects are, in a word, strange. Certainly, they were nothing like the shields that Lewis had come to expect based on his review of the extant anthropological literature.

Made out of crocodile skin [Figure 2.2] and a woven mesh of wooden sticks [Figure 2.3], respectively, these two works highlight just how dramatically the famine camps had altered Turkana aesthetic sensibility. For while both faithfully replicate the general shape of a Turkana-made shield, the shift away from unblemished, brown animal hide is a radical departure from the established norm. Note the gaudy pattern of the crocodile skin and intricate and almost delicate interlace of sticks and hide. Nothing could be farther from the thick, slightly wrinkled, and visually bland skin of elephant, hippopotami and rhinoceroses. In older Turkana-made shields, the material stretched over the wooden frame was chosen deliberately for its generic qualities. Nothing could be less remarkable in this arid, monochromatic land than large swaths of brown—a fact that pre-colonial Turkana artists used in order to detract from an object itself and amplify its allegiance with historic forms and traditional norms. In comparison, the gaudy and intricate works collected by Morden were designed specifically to stand out. They are sculptures meant to attract attention and to signify the wearer's individuality. Lewis' catalogue

¹²⁹ The manuscript catalogue for the first shield lists it only as coming from "Lake Rudolf." See American Museum of Natural History, "Manuscript Catalog: Colonel William J. Morden Gift, 1948-1955," 181. However, there is no record of the former being purchased by Kepler Lewis, who kept an exhaustive record where the objects he acquired came from. Therefore, it is highly likely that it was collected by the expedition leaders, William J. Morden, on his far shorter visit to the district. A review of Morden's account of his time in the district, reveals that he only made one stop on Lake Rudolf, at Ferguson's Gulf. See William and Irene Morden, *Our African Adventure* (London: Seeley Service, 1954), 129-149.

suggests as much. Indeed, speaking of the shield made from crocodile hide he notes that it was “not actually used by Turkana.”¹³⁰

Creativity and Colonial Capitalism

This phrase—“not actually used by Turkana”—is critical to understanding one of the reasons behind the aesthetic shifts instantiated by the process of sedenterization. It suggests that these shields, by entering the collection of an American explorer through a sale, had fulfilled their intended function: to be sold. Neither useful as defensive weaponry nor as intragroup symbols of adult masculinity, they had transformed commodities. And indeed, a close examination of the objects confirms this assessment. None of the traditional signs of use that one would expect to see on a shield—a patina of wear on the handle, scratches on the front-facing crocodile hide, or broken sticks in the woven piece—are present. These objects are, to use a capitalist term, brand new.

Sales such as the one that allowed Kepler Lewis to obtain the crocodile hide shield had long been the goal of the British colonial administrators. By creating famine relief camps such as the one described above, the colonial administration was able to leverage the increasingly precarious climate of the district to create, for the very first time, centers of nascent capitalism. Indeed, while early famine relief efforts in the district had been limited to forcing the dispossessed to work for rations (i.e. posho)—oftentimes in back-breaking tasks like road construction and locust control—in 1933 and 1934, colonial administrators realized that the construction of famine relief camps could serve their longer-term objectives: namely the

¹³⁰ American Museum of Natural History, “Manuscript Catalog: Colonel William J. Morden Gift, 1948-1955,” 181.

sedenterization of the population and the instantiation of a capitalist economy.¹³¹ Said one district commissioner in reference to Ferguson's Gulf: It was "a cheap and lasting method of famine relief, with the idea later developing into a scheme for domestic industry."¹³²

Nomadic pastoralists, after all, are troublesome populations for modern-day nation-states and their colonial enterprises. Because nomadic men and women do not stay in one place, they are hard to police and even harder to tax. They are also, in general, resistant to capitalist conceptualizations of property and have little use for monetary accumulation. One accumulates cattle and other herd animals, yes. But stock animals, first and foremost, are a means of subsistence. Stated one Turkana elder:

Money is a foreign property. It is detached from Turkana people. ... Money promotes laziness and serfdom. ... Money was brought into the district by the *emoit* [Europeans/enemy]. ... Those who get enough use it to buy livestock and food. The important thing is not to get money itself but to buy food. In the old days, people preferred direct barter to getting coins or paper in exchange for an animal. Not many people knew how to use it, but everybody knew how to use the animals on the hoof. ... People who have money, even the *Wazungus* [Swahili for White people], do not eat money, they eat livestock and edible plants. So even the owners do not have any close relationship with their property. It is just a means of acquisition which has no relationship with the community.¹³³

Put most broadly, a nomadic existence is conflict with the capitalist mode of production and, more generally, with the idea of the nation-state with which it is inextricably intertwined.

Nomadic pastoralism is one mode of production and capitalism is another. They, in many ways,

¹³¹ For the most thorough compilation of the history famine relief practices, see: KNA-DC/TURK/1/1/8: P. Crichton, "Annual Report for Turkana District, 1949."

¹³² KNA-DC/TURK/1/1/7: R.D.F. Ryland, "Annual Report for Turkana District, 1936" 18 January 1937, 23.

¹³³ Unidentified Turkana elder quoted in Vigdis Broch-Due, "Remembered Cattle, Forgotten People: The Morality of Exchange & the Exclusion of the Turkana Poor," in *The Poor Are Not Us: Poverty & Pastoralism in Eastern Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1999), 79. Translation by Broch-Due.

do not overlap. However, given the mandate for fiscal self-sufficiency it was necessary for the colonial state to more effectively and efficiently tax Turkana men and women [see Chapter Three]. Moreover, given the paltry taxation rate in the district—which oscillated between Shs/3- and Shs/6- during the late colonial period—the colonial state was interested in developing industries in the district, industries that would develop surplus commodities, export these commodities, bring money into the district, and thus allow the colonial administration to raise the tax rates.

All of this required colonial administrators to attempt a gargantuan task: to convince or force a largely nomadic population to become sedentary and produce surplus commodities. Farming was initially seen as the silver bullet, and administrator after administrator imported crop after crop in an attempt to jumpstart the type of agricultural economies that flourished across the rest of the British empire. However, with almost no exception, all of these agricultural schemes failed, in part because of the “soda-impregnated soil,” in part because of the lack of rain, and in part because of the common Turkana belief that farming was work performed by impoverished individuals of low social standing.

Given these failures, colonial administrators then turned their attention (somewhat unhappily so) to the development of a fishing industry. So enamored were they of the idea that each reported eagerly on the progress made at camps in each monthly report. It is also why they required these men and women to begin producing the woven lengths of dome-palm twine and eagerly encouraged entrepreneurs to set up businesses at Ferguson’s Gulf; they were attempting to establish both a capitalist spirit and create a supply of objects that had no obvious use for the climate refugees settled along the lake.

And, in many ways, it worked. Lewis, the American anthropologist hired to do the majority of collecting for the Morden Expedition, noted considerable surprise throughout his four-month stay in the district that Turkana men and women from the lake region were so eager to conduct business in the shillings. On July 23, 1947—midway through his stay—he wrote:

I came here under the impression that I would be doing considerable bartering, using native tobacco. We brought in a lot of native tobacco and I had 100 shillings in five and ten cent pieces. To my surprise, the Turkana were well aware of the value of a shilling, even those who were 50 miles from the nearest duka [store] where a shilling could be spent.¹³⁴

More importantly still, Lewis also found that Turkana men and women were not only willing— but eager—to sell him works of art and material culture. Some of these were older works, pieces that resemble early twentieth century styles and feature the wear one would expect to find on objects with some sort of age. Many, however, were not. Lewis was quite comfortable collected both works that had been made relatively recently, as well as works that were had not traditionally been part of the Turkana material canon. Having never spent time in the district, his was not a discerning eye, nor one that was particularly interested in the notion of ‘authenticity.’ As a collector of an anthropology museum, he happily purchased or bartered for almost every object. And indeed, many of these objects show signs that they were made specifically for sale.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ AMNH-Rare Book Collection/42F/Box 2: Kepler Lewis, “Journal of a Safari in Turkana: The Morden Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History,” 106.

¹³⁵ A fascinating example of this can be seen in the cattle horn containers that Lewis collected on June 30, 1947. Although described to him as “tobacco containers,” they contain no trace of either tobacco residue or smell. And indeed, their leather caps are incredibly tight, suggesting relatively recent manufacture. I have not come across

And it is this fact—the nascent capitalist spirit penetrating the district— that explains why the two shields collected along the lake are allowed to deviate so dramatically from the unblemished, brown hide of their older cousins. When objects cease to serve their intended purpose—when they become commodities intended for buyers outside of group that makes them—a new world of creative possibilities emerges. Freed from the mandates of intragroup patrons, artists are allowed freedom to shape their creations for the external market, to respond to the availability of new materials and follow their creative impulses. And though one can see evidence the aesthetic impacts of capitalism throughout the district in the late 1940s, given the long history of refugee re-settlement in this area, as well as the colonial administration’s zeal for fishing, its effects are most evident along the lake.

The materiality of the crocodile skin shield is an excellent example of the aesthetic impact of capitalism in the lake region. Although crocodiles are native to Lake Rudolf (Turkana) they had never before been used as a material in Turkana artistic production, in part because the vast majority of people did not live by the lake and in part because they were dangerous and difficult to kill. All this changed when the colonial administration and its scores of refugees moved onto the shores of the lake. There, Turkana residents came into more frequent contact with crocodiles, and it was not uncommon for members of the Tribal Police to be dispatched to kill particularly troublesome creatures.¹³⁶ Indeed, one district commissioner complained that

any other cattle horn containers in the extant Turkana material record and, as suggested by Lewis’ interpreter, Loichamba, it may be the case that they were created to hold tax receipts. AMNH-Rare Book Collection/42F/Box 1: Kepler Lewis, “Journal of a Safari in Turkana: The Morden Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History,” 17.

¹³⁶ A particularly memorable episode is recounted in KNA-DC/LDW/2/13/1: Denis McKay, “Monthly Intelligence Report, October 1939,” 3.

“many crocodiles and turtles are interfering with the fishing and are a big menace for the fisherman and gear.”¹³⁷

The needs of the colonial administration to both feed the climate refugees at Ferguson’s Gulf and spur the development of capitalist industry allowed materials like crocodile skin to become available for the first time. However, while the crocodile hide shield collected by Morden may have been created for sale, its material still reflects a conscious attempt by Turkana artists to translate the material significance embedded in the Turkana material world into their new, settled context. In previous decades, Turkana-made shields were made using the hide of rhinoceros, elephant, or hippopotamus, all large, dangerous, and are hard-to-kill animals that would signify the strength and power associated with male warriors. Along the lake, crocodiles were similarly apex animals, thus making the incorporation a natural substitution. Moreover, in the indigenous world of northwestern Kenya, crocodiles (sing: *akinyang*; pl: *ngakinyanga*) are closely associated with Turkana diviners. Like mudfish in the west African Kingdom of Benin, these creatures’ ability to move between the land and the lake placed them within a transitional, othered, somewhat supernatural category, one that distinctly separate from the savannahs of nomadic pastoralism.¹³⁸ It is, thus, not at all surprising that their skin was used by men and women occupying a liminal space in their own life.

The late colonial record from northwestern Kenya is replete with objects and stories like the one I have just described. Indeed, by placing Ferguson’s Gulf so close to the district

¹³⁷ Quoted in Kolding, “The fish resources of Lake Turkana and their environment,” 155-156.

¹³⁸ Vigdis Broch-Due, “The Bodies within the Body: Journeys in Turkana Thought and Practice,” (PhD diss, University of Bergen, 1990), 385+415.

headquarters of Lodwar—it is not even forty-five miles away—the colonial administration established, for the very first time, a center and a periphery in the region. Before the camp, the administrative headquarters was largely avoided by the indigenous residents of Turkana. It was, after all, too associated with taxation, confiscation, and colonial surveillance. However, given the ever-worsening climate and the expanding numbers of indigent individuals, Lodwar and its nearby famine-relief camp came to play more and more of a prominent role in the minds and actions of the district’s men and women. Indeed, as Ferguson’s Gulf expanded to accommodate more and more people, the materials found in its lacustrine environment began to be tapped by the district’s residents in greater and greater quantities.

Take, for instance, the feathers used in the traditional chignon (or, as it frequently appears in the colonial literature, ‘mudpack’) worn by Turkana men. Whereas previous generations had incorporated in ostrich feathers into the fibrous plume holder worn on the top of the head, in the 1940s, more and more men started to desire pelican feathers.¹³⁹ Wrote Lewis:

Loichamba [Lewis’ interpreter and a member of the Tribal Police] pointed out a pelican, which had worked close in to the beach, and wanted me to shoot it. Some Turkana use the breast skin with feathers attached to make a cover for the back bun of a headdress. These are pretty popular with young Turkana, and I saw one as far west at Emurochrod, 80 miles from the lake.¹⁴⁰

New Forms, New People: The Camp as Melting Pot

¹³⁹ For a discussion of the evolution of this hairstyle in the region, see Gustaaf Verswijver, “Removable Haircaps of the Karamoja (Uganda),” *African Arts* 43, no. 4 (2010): 60-71.

¹⁴⁰ AMNH-Rare Book Collection/42F/Box 2: Lewis, “Journal of a Safari in Turkana,” 106.

The circulation of new materials throughout the district is just one of several ways that the lake-based famine relief camps transformed the art and material culture of the region. As we have seen in the case of the crocodile hide shield and the pelican feather chignons, the impact of lacustrine materials transformed the look, but not the shape or structure of the material culture. However, the heterogeneity of the famine relief camps—that is to say, the ways in which populations from almost every section in the district were forced to live in close proximity —also had a profound impact, one that profoundly altered the traditional forms created the largely nomadic population. Put more specifically, by locating the famine relief sections along the lake, the colonial administration forced formerly nomadic populations to consistently interact the *Ngibosheros*, a small group of lake-dwelling fishers who lived in this area of the district. As sedentary fishers, these men and women had a radically different aesthetic than the nomadic sections—one based in weaving and assemblages—and these interactions allowed for this aesthetic to take hold in the minds and the forms of the climate refugees.

Examine, for instance, the art objects and architectural structures created at Todenyang, a lake-side famine relief camp in the extreme northeast of the district.¹⁴¹ Established initially as a military fort in 1929, the settlement quickly expanded into a mixed-use development, housing the military units that surveilled the Ethiopian border as well as a rapidly expanding famine relief camp.¹⁴² Said Lewis in 1947:

¹⁴¹ AMNH-Rare Book Collection/42F/Box 1: Kepler Lewis, “Journal of a Safari in Turkana: The Morden Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History,” 76-77.

¹⁴² KNA-DC/TURK/3/1: M.W.F.P. Kelly, “Turkana District,” 6.

This is the largest permanent settlement in the district. There are several hundred people living here fishing and farming. The numerous huts are built in the sand and in no regular ordered fashion. I could not even detect family groupings, though they may exist. The huts are clustered, with a few feet to several yards between houses, about two hundred yards from the fort.

This population explosion was largely the result of its comparatively lush and fertile environment. Located in Omo River delta, this northeastern region was one of the few areas of the district that could support some form of permanent agriculture. Indeed, it received an average of the twelve inches of rain a year and had relatively plentiful grass and vegetal cover throughout the year. These were used by the *Ngibosheros* to produce a cornucopia of woven materials. From fish traps [Figure 2.4] to the architectural structures [Figure 2.5], the vast majority of objects—and certainly, the most important ones in daily life—were created by lacing vegetal material together at right angles.

In the late colonial period, as the famine relief camp at Todenyang expanded to include larger and larger numbers of refugees from across the northern and central parts of the district, a series of unique artworks began to be created. These works merged the indigenous formal structures at Todenyang with those produced by historically nomadic sections. The shield made of “slender sticks interwoven with leather” is a clear example of one such type of object.¹⁴³ Although, Lewis’s journal states only that it was purchased from “a [Turkana] family on the move” at Emurochrod—a temporary settlement about forty miles west of Lodwar—its unique method of construction definitively marks it as originating in this region. Indeed, Lewis even noted the similarities between the two, referencing the similar construction techniques

¹⁴³ AMNH, “Manuscript Catalog: Colonel William J. Morden Gift, 1948-1955,” 181.

between the architectural structures at Todenyang and the wickerwork shield. The fact that it was purchased so far from camp also supports this hypothesis and suggests that the work was made by an individual who was, at one point, based at Todenyang. The *Ngibosheros*, after all, were not nomadic and would not, in any circumstance, have been found “on the move” at a watering hole one hundred and fifty miles from their home base.

On Desire

Nevertheless, in spite of the artistic license that sedenterization allowed, there is a kernel of the old Turkana aesthetic to be found in both of these shields. Materials and construction processes aside, the overall form of these shields remains relatively consistent with that which came before. The long, thin rectangular shape has been preserved, albeit in an exaggerated or highly altered form. Indeed, in both of the two late-colonial pieces, one senses a desire not to deviate too far from the historically-resonant form. Innovation and evolution are, of course, possible, but only within the boundaries of established structures.

To understand why allegiance to a historically-resonant form would have been so important for many of the climate refugees at on the lake, it is necessary to internalize how ontologically traumatic the process of sedenterization would have been for the vast majority of these men and women. One only need look at the 1961 settlement layout of Ferguson’s Gulf [Figure 2.6] to understand how dramatic this shift in circumstance must have. Labelle Prussin, in her now-classic study on African nomadic architecture, has defined nomadic pastoralism as being fundamentally hodological, or path based, state of being. Responsive to the environment and diametrically opposed to a Euclidean and cardinal way of relating to the world, hodological

cultures, she argues, “orient themselves in space...along paths or directions in response to topographic features in the natural environment.”¹⁴⁴

More importantly still, the transition away a nomadic, herd-based life would have carried with it strong negative connotations, ones associated not only with personal, but also, with more failure. As Vigdis Broch-Due has brilliantly illuminated, Turkana notions of subjectivity and selfhood are inextricably intertwined with their herd animals.¹⁴⁵ As such, both the presence of herd animals and the resulting mobility that is required are indexes of social status, morality, and, indeed, selfhood. Compare, for instance, the Ngiturkana words for a prosperous person, *ebarasit*, versus that for an indigent, *ngikebootok*. The latter can be translated literally as ‘lack of livestock,’ but also connotes an individual whose poor choices have resulted in a life without cattle and other herd animals. Different from an *elongait*, or a person whose temporary impoverishment resulted from circumstances outside of their control (e.g. disease or raids), *ngikebootok* references a moral failing linked to the failure to care for one’s animals. Indeed, Turkana men and women have been known to say that an *ngikebootok* took the wrong ‘path’ (*erot*), which is the same the Meanwhile, *ebarasit*, the Ngiturkana term for someone who is prosperous, translates literally as ‘full-filled,’ and references the notion that one has achieved wholeness as a human because of their large herd. All of this is, perhaps, best summarized by Broch-Due, who, in her discussion of Turkana poverty, amalgamates the

¹⁴⁴ Prussin, *African Nomadic Architecture*, 35.

¹⁴⁵ See Broch-Due, “The Bodies within the Body,” 1990.

responses of her interlocutors to construct a summative sentence of Turkana beliefs about poverty: “You make poverty or prosperity through the ways you move your livestock.”¹⁴⁶

Given this, it is only natural that the artworks produced by these climate refugees would seek to mimic the shape of objects produced before their impoverishment. Although their lives had been dramatically (and sometimes irrevocably) altered by the experience of drought and famine, the men and women who found themselves in these lacustrine camps were, at their core, still Turkana. And they proclaimed that identity using material objects. In short, by retaining a tie to historically-resonant, symbolically-loaded form, the Turkana men and women declared visual allegiance with a recognized form of social belonging would have helped alleviate feelings of displacement and moral failure.

Conclusion

As I have sought to demonstrate in this chapter, lakeside famine relief camps during the late colonial period served as incubators of artistic innovation, heterogeneous spaces where different ideologies, modes of production, and people came colliding into contact. These collisions instantiated a dramatic shift in the art and material culture of region, a fact that can be seen both in the proliferation of new materials throughout the district as well as in the innovative construction processes that began to be appropriated by formerly nomadic artists. Nevertheless, in spite of these material and processual transformations, the objects created in these lacustrine environments never lost their essential “Turkana-ness.” Indeed, in spite of shifting modes of production and the trauma of displacement, the objects retain their

¹⁴⁶ Broch-Due, “Remembered Cattle, Forgotten People” in *The Poor Are Not Us*, 51. Information in this entire paragraph comes from this entire article.

allegiance to historically-resonant forms and shapes. This liminality is, I argue, a defining feature of late colonial artistic production in northwestern Kenya.

ROWLAND BAKER-BEALL AND THE EMPATHETIC LANDSCAPE: Photography and Colonial Policy in the 1930s

The ash fields of northwestern Kenya's Lorian Plateau appear suddenly and without warning in the final pages of the Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1932. Sandwiched between a table detailing the year's sheep exports and a series of architectural diagrams from an abandoned administrative outpost, this rocky, lifeless land—a lava plateau one mile above sea level—erupts into the reader's field of vision from the right, emerging, first in pieces and then in full, as the preceding page is flipped from right to left. It is a disorienting move, an unannounced act that shifts the location of cognition from the parietal to the occipital lobe, transforming reader into viewer. Accompanying this shift is a rapid acceleration in the rate at which the presented information is processed and understood by the individual in question's brain. Instead of apprehending meaning over time—that is to say, by interpreting individual words and synthesizing their meaning in real time—the reader-now-viewer immediately encounters what they perceive as holistic, synthesized world, one that, in this case, is appears to the viewer in the form a small, four-by-six-inch black-and-white photograph [Figure 3.1]. In the work, the alien ground, barren hills, and hazy clarity of sky all arrive in an instant, heightening the emotional response of the viewer in a way that could never be achieved solely through text. Such is the power of images.

Of course, as with almost everything in life, the trade-off for speed is accuracy. Information that is processed visually is more likely to be misunderstood and misinterpreted than that which is transmitted through text. This is particularly true in the case of photography. Indeed, as Rosalind Krauss has argued, the indexical weight of photographs in Euro-American

culture requires a greater degree of contextualization than visual mediums such as painting or drawing, which are understood as being more receptive to symbolic interpretation.¹⁴⁷ Put another way, Krauss proposes that because we perceive a photograph to be a more direct representation of reality than, say, a watercolor, we are less attuned to the meanings encoded in the image by the photographer. We see it less as a constructed arrangement on visual signs, the product of a creative mind at work, and more as a presentation of the ‘way things were.’

Given this, it is surprising that the fifty-seven pages of text that precede the photograph in question—*The Kerio Floors-Chief Kionga’s Location*—reference neither the image itself nor the place nor person mentioned in its caption. Rather, the work appears unmoored from that which came before it. Its maker—Rowland Baker-Beall, the District Commissioner of Southern Turkana and author of the report in which it is found—seems to have included it not as an illustration of a previously communicated textual message, but instead, as individual, independent composition, a visual cluster of signs intended to stand on their own and carry their own message. The request implicit with this sort staging is ‘Stop. Look closer.’ In a bureaucracy that produced as much written material as that of colonial Kenya, the young administrator seems to be shrewdly trying to grab the viewer’s attention, to force them to take the time to apprehend the scene and deduce the reason for its inclusion within the report.

The formal elements of the composition—which are designed to heighten the drama of the scene—bear this assertion out. At its core, the image revolves around a break in the ridge of rocky hills that sit in the shallow middle-ground of the photograph. Under normal

¹⁴⁷ See Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985). Of particular relevance is “Notes on the Index 1” and “Notes on the Index 2.”

circumstances, this naturally-occurring geological feature would have little effect on either the look or feel of the represented land. Yet, by placing this break at both the middle of the compositional space as well as on the strong horizon line that bisects the photograph into nearly equal halves, Baker-Beall converts the void into what is known as a vanishing point, that is to say a space where the angular perspective lines found within the image converge on a single point.¹⁴⁸ Note the nearly perfect diagonals that descend from hill to soil on both sides of the photograph's middle ground. These lines intersect at one location and one location only—the break in the hills—and, as a result, create an optical illusion known as one-point perspective, a visual technique that tricks the human eye into perceiving spatial recession that does not exist. And though vanishing points can appear at any point given the proper orthogonal intersection, those that are placed in the center of a composition have been found to be particularly effective at organizing virtual space and directing the viewer's attention.¹⁴⁹ For instance, were the break in the hills were placed at either the extreme left or extreme right of the scene, the image would be radically different from the one that made its way into the Annual Report of 1932. For *The Kerio Floors* transforms what is, in actuality, a rocky plateau set against a range of hills miles in the distance into a shallow valley, a rift encircled by barren rocks that erupt out of the rocky, ashen soil.

This ingenious use of one-point perspective—and the perceptual shift it engenders in the viewer— heightens the drama of the presented scene and increases the feeling of sublime

¹⁴⁸ Michael Kubovy, *The Psychology of Perspective and Renaissance Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 26-31.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

terror brought about the landscape's utter lack of life and its complete and total stillness. More importantly though, by framing the photograph in this particular way, Baker-Beall created an engaging image, one that draws the viewer in and thrusts them into this remote and previously unrecorded location on the Loru Plateau. Note, for instance, how the hills seem to recede toward the vanishing point, their sides appearing to be ever-so-slightly foreshortened. Moreover, notice how even the smallest of rocks seems to point toward middle of composition. Indeed, looking at the image, it is hard not to be swept into the flow from foreground to middle ground to vanishing point.

The psychologist Michael Kubovy has persuasively argued that the use of perspective can bring about a type of out-of-body experience, one in which the mind's eye—what he calls the ego center—is at odds with the actual location of the physical organ vis-à-vis the image. While we can rationally understand that we are not actually standing on the sharp, black rocks that cover the Kerio Floors, there is a part of our mind that believes we are, or at least, that it could be possible. In Renaissance Italy, Kubovy claimed, this technique was used to heighten a viewer's spiritual experience, to bring them closer to the divine figures represented in oils and tempera.¹⁵⁰

However, in the world of colonial Kenya, Baker-Beall's ingenious use of the one-point perspective was motivated for reasons more political than religious: He wanted his superiors, namely Arthur M. Champion, the Provincial Commissioner of Turkana, to understand—and more importantly, to feel—the harsh reality of life in a district that he indirectly oversaw. By constructing a scene that would immerse viewers within in it and fill them with the dread that

¹⁵⁰ Kubovy, *The Psychology of Perspective*, 16.

and European would experience upon being placed in such an unforgiving, overwhelming place, Baker-Beall was shrewdly manipulating not only the representation of the land, but also, the emotions of the region's decision-makers. The title of the work, *The Kerio Floors-Chief Kionga's Location*, speaks to this. By highlighting the fact that a named individual —and a chief (a colonial employee), no less—was living in this barren, lifeless tract of land, the young administrator was, I argue, attempting to prompt empathy and provoke humanitarian relief efforts for the Turkana pastoralists living in locations like the Loriu Plateau.

Of course, this is just one photograph pasted in the back of just one report. The likelihood that it, on its own, would have made much of a difference is marginal at the best. However, the strident language found within the document, as well as the incorporation of selected landscape photographs into the report, was anything but new. Since nearly the beginning of his tenure as District Commissioner, Baker-Beall had been writing report after report that spoke of the increasingly desperate situation faced by the autochthonous Turkana residents of this sprawling, sparsely populated 8,810 square mile district. From monthly intelligence reports written for his supervisor in Kapenguria to safari reports compiled after any trip that brought him outside the district headquarters of Kaputir, he emphasized again and again the inhospitable nature of the district and marginal lives of the people who made it their home. As he wrote in one of the 1932 report's numerous appendices: "All Station records—dating back to 1926—emphasize the barrenness of the country, drought, the scattering of the population in

all except three months of the year in search of food, and the resolute endurance of a starving people.”¹⁵¹

Indeed, in this, penultimate report as civil administrator of the district, he concluded that “all present indications go to show that the Ngiturkana are in a desperate position not only in so far as their present needs are concerned, but in the question of their actual continued existence as a people,”¹⁵² and then proceeded—in a most dramatic fashion—to recommend a twenty year tax exemption for the District of Southern Turkana.¹⁵³ And though he was transferred out of the district on January 9, 1933—having “only just [medically] managed to remain at [his] post till [his] leave was due”—perhaps the most lasting legacy of his record-breaking nineteen months of service in Southern Turkana was his success in securing a one-year tax exemption during the 1933 fiscal year—an act that had never before been offered in the district.¹⁵⁴ Doing so meant convincing his superiors—namely Arthur M. Champion, the Provincial Commissioner of Turkana Province—that the ecological and humanitarian situation faced by the region in the 1930s was dire enough to supersede London’s mandate for fiscal self-sufficiency. More broadly, though, it involved inculcating a belief that the harsh, arid environment of northwestern Kenya had a demonstrable and oftentimes deleterious effect on

¹⁵¹ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, “Appendix IV: A Consideration of the Economic Condition of the Ngiturkana especially in relation to their ability to pay Hut-Tax,” in “Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1932,” 10-11.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵⁴ KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: Champion, “Annual Report, Turkana Province, 1932;” KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: Champion, “Annual Report, Turkana Province, 1933,” 7.

day-to-day life—and that it was the duty of the colonial administration to mediate and provide relief from these ecological and climactic conditions.

This chapter is, first and foremost, an attempt to understand how Baker-Beall was able to instigate the 1933 tax abatement in Southern Turkana and bring about this shift in thinking. But while it is, on one hand, a story about Baker-Beall's remarkable abilities of persuasion, it is also a tale of his coming-of-age and radicalization in the dry savannahs of northwestern Kenya. The colonial administration, after all, was normally not a place in which deviance from the status quo was either likely or tolerated. As Caroline Elkins has reported, officers "were handpicked in targeted recruitment campaigns that openly sought future colonial rulers with a...common ideology of aristocratic superiority."¹⁵⁵ The questions that thus emerge from Baker-Beall's successful advocacy on behalf of Turkana pastoralists at the expense of the British colonial government are numerous to be sure. Most fundamentally: What was it that prompted Baker-Beall to so doggedly pursue the issue of tax relief during his tenure as District Commissioner? Indeed, how did a young, Oxford-educated man from an upper class, English family transform in the space of nineteen months from a typical colonial agent into a radical of sorts, an individual who sought to dramatically alter the status quo and champion the interests of a historically-troublesome ethnic group widely considered to be a race of noble savages?¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005), 8. See also Bruce Berman, *Control & Crisis*, 97-103.

¹⁵⁶ After the period of massive resistance detailed in Lamphear, *The Scattering Time*, 1992, the colonial administration and the military began to regard Turkana with something of a disdainful respect. While administrators and military officials looked down on the pastoralist way of life, they nevertheless respected the work ethic of the people and their seeming stoicism in the face of adversity. Indeed, they made frequent comments about the Egyptian bearing and grace of these Nilotic speakers and ranked them higher on the so-called ladder of civilization than the Bantu speakers living to the south, whom they viewed as slovenly and lazy. See, for Kittermaster, "History of the Turkana," 1-5.

More importantly still, what prompted administration officials to take action in this situation when they had not done so during previous droughts? What was it about Baker-Beall's entreaties that were effective?

The answers to these two areas of inquiry lie, I argue, in the environment of the district and its verbal and visual depiction by Baker-Beall. For the young district commissioner, the experience of living in the land was a transformational one. Southern Turkana was his first posting as District Commissioner and the responsibility of being the chief administrator of a far-flung territory such as this one meant that he was constantly on the move. Indeed, an analysis of station records from Kaputir reveals that, of the 579 days served as District Commissioner of Southern Turkana, 163 of those were spent traveling the district by car, camel, or foot.¹⁵⁷ On these travels, he not only experienced the changing climate first hand, but he also came into contact with countless Turkana men, women, and children through community barazas (meetings), geographical mapping expeditions, and the never-ending task of tax collection. And it was these day-to-day experiences that changed the way he related to the people who were forced by colonial policies to eke out an existence in this barren, rocky land. Through these experiences—of sweating and struggling, of listening and learning—he began to empathize with these men and women, to bond with them over their shared experiences in the land, and, ultimately, to see them as people who were simply trying to survive in an environment and a

¹⁵⁷ This figure was arrived at by tracking the District Commissioner's travels through the monthly intelligence reports written by Baker-Beall, W.H. Felling, and N.F Kennaway between June 1931 and January 1933. See all of KNA-DC/TURK/4/2.

climate that was not meant for them.¹⁵⁸ And that is exactly what Baker-Beall was attempting to do with his images: to bring about a shared experience of life in the land that would bridge colonial-era racist paternalism and prompt humanitarian action. This chapter traces the evolution of Baker-Beall's photographic of the course of the district and analyzes how, in the waning days of his time in the district, he deployed it for maximum value.

At the beginning of his tenure in Southern Turkana, no one—least of all Baker-Beall himself—would have expected him to turn into such a forceful indigenous rights activist. Indeed, when he arrived in district of southern Turkana on June 3, 1931, two days before he was due to take up his position as district commissioner, it was with a resume that had been tailor made for the position.¹⁵⁹ Born in 1903 to well-to-do family in Beer, England, Rowland William Cunningham Baker-Beall seemed destined for a charmed life.¹⁶⁰ He was educated first at The Shelbourne School—where served as prefect, head of school, newspaper editor, and soccer team captain—and then at Oxford University, where he studied at Worcester College, achieved middling grades, and received a bachelor's degree in English.¹⁶¹ From there, he went on to join the

¹⁵⁸ Baker-Beall is thought to be the first European to achieve fluency in Nga'turkana. At the very least, he was the first British officer in the colonial administration to do so. See KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: Champion, "Annual Report, Turkana Province, 1933," 3.

¹⁵⁹ KNA-DC/TURK/3/2: Arthur M. Champion, "Handing Over Report for Turkana Province," 81.

¹⁶⁰ *The Colonial Office List* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1955), 265. Following his service in Kenya, which ended in the early 1941, he was sent to Zanzibar, where he was finance secretary for the entire district. In 1947, he transferred to Nigeria, the largest colony, where he was deputy finance secretary. He became a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 1953.

¹⁶¹ For Baker-Beall's accomplishments in secondary school see *The Shirburnian* 31, no. 7 (1922): 149+168; For Baker-Beall's academic degree at Oxford see "University Examination Results, 1925," *The Review of English Studies* 1, no. 4 (Oct. 1925): 510

colonial service, which he did in 1927, at the age of twenty-four. Upon entry, he was commissioned as a cadet and assigned to Meru District, Kenya. And after his two-year tour in that east-central region, he was promoted to district officer and sent to Kamba, where he once again distinguished himself. It was then, after only four years of service, that Baker-Beall, a fresh-faced twenty-seven-year-old, was sent to the district of Southern Turkana, one of the most remote and climactically challenging of all assignments.

As this brief life history demonstrates, Baker-Beall was a big-man-on-campus type—that is to say a broad overachiever, someone who was good at many things but not especially good at any one thing in particular. And it was this broad spectrum of accomplishments—social, athletic, academic, and economic—that made him ideally suited for the role of district commissioner. Indeed, he seems to have aligned exactly with what Bruce Berman has described as the Colonial Office’s ideal candidate for an administrative officer in Kenya: “modest intellectual achievement, athletic prowess, a taste for outdoor life, and, implicitly, unquestioned acceptance of the ‘aristocratic’ ethos of rule and the ideal of imperialism.”¹⁶² District Commissioners, after all, were given a wide degree of latitude in making decisions and were expected to unquestioningly uphold the status quo and resist rocking the metaphoric boat. And that was Baker-Beall. Indeed, up until his posting in Southern Turkana, nothing in Baker-Beall’s life had been particularly challenging, either to his person or to his worldview. As such, he had little reason to question the dominant imperial systems in which he had been brought up.

¹⁶² Berman, *Control & Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 110.

His photographs from his first six months in the district reflect this attitude, training, and upbringing. Indeed, they replicate what can generally be thought of as the generic aesthetic of the colonial administration, one that is based in both a documentary tradition and a belief in English cultural superiority.¹⁶³ They are also incredibly dull. Of the twelve works that can be definitively linked to both Baker-Beall and to this time period, four document bush clearing [Figure 3.2], four depict the construction process of the new district headquarters at Kaputir [Figure 3.3], and four showcase standing regiments of the Turkana Tribal Police [Figure 3.4]. Looking at them, it is hard not to yawn—and not only because each is out of focus and shot from a strange, angled distance. Rather, what truly makes these photographs so profoundly banal is the “civilizing mission” narrative that is blatantly and inexpertly embedded in each one. Scenes of civilizations ‘triumph’ over nature and depictions of formerly rebellious ‘natives’ in uniforms and orderly lines are a dime a dozen in colonial record books. And, after four years in colonial service, Baker-Beall would be well-accustomed to seeing them. As such, his photographs from his first several months in the district repackage those expected narratives and signal the young man’s ambition to toe the party line and avoid ruffling any feather in his first job with significant responsibility.

In fairness to the young district commissioner, he was not, at this point, attempting to construct an artistic composition or make any real statement through any of these photographs. Rather, as evidenced by the shoddy technique and composition, it is clear that these works were assignments, objects that he created knowing that doing so would please his new

¹⁶³ See, for instance, Paul S. Landau, “Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Administration in Africa,” in *Images & Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Paul S. Landau and Deborah Kaspin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 141-171.

supervisor: Arthur M. Champion, the long-serving Provincial Commissioner of Turkana Province. An early and enthusiastic proponent of the medium, Champion had long encouraged his officers to exploit the documentary potential of the photographic technology to record ethnographic scenes of day-to-day life and survey the largely unexplored geography of Northern Turkana, Southern Turkana, and West Suk, the three districts found within this remote province in northwestern Kenya. An amateur geographer and anthropologist himself, he eagerly lapped up any and all images that would give him a better sense of the province's land and its people. "The report would I feel create a better impression if...you could spare a photograph or two to accompany it" was a not uncommon directive sent to those under his command.¹⁶⁴ And like the dutiful members of the prefectural structure in which they were embedded, the vast majority of his officers complied.

However, as Baker-Beall spent time traveling throughout the land of Southern Turkana, his unwavering loyalty to the colonial bureaucracy began to dissipate. In the beginning, such extensive travel was necessitated by the arduous task of tax collection, which, in the early 1930s, involved traveling by camel across the 8,810 square mile region to find and then collect three shillings from every Turkana adult.¹⁶⁵ However, the more Baker-Beall traveled, the more he learned and the more he developed a passion for the district and the people who made it home. "It has been necessary," he wrote in his first annual report, "for District Officers to spend

¹⁶⁴ See, for instance, KNA-DC/LDW/2/23/3: Letter from A.M. Champion to R.W. Baker-Beall, 19 May 1932, 1.

¹⁶⁵ In general, the idea was that the District Commissioner would ask each section's chiefs to set up tax-collection barazas (meetings) that men and women would travel to, money in hand. See, for example, KNA-DC/LDW/2/23/3: R.W. Baker-Beall, "Safari Report, 15 October – 29 October 1931," 3 November 1931, 1.

the major part of their time on tour with the intention of getting to know more intimately natives who were both shy and fearful of Government.”¹⁶⁶

And get to know the ‘natives’ he did. A buoyantly sociable and curious man, he used these long camel rides between tax collection barazas to learn Nga’turkana—becoming the first, and perhaps only district commissioner to achieve fluency in the language.¹⁶⁷ Every baraza and every trip became an opportunity for him to meet the people of the district and listen to their personal histories, present-day struggles, and views on the world. He had an anthropologist’s ear for cultural detail, and his kinship diagrams, accounts of cultural history, and folklore compilations have been a resource to legions of researchers and future colonial administrators. Said one writer in 1945, “Mr. Baker Beall probably knew more about them [the people living in South Turkana] than anybody.”¹⁶⁸ And while all these efforts were certainly colored by his upbringing in imperial England, his engagements with Turkana men and women were, by all extant accounts, sincere, genuine, and driven by an impulse rooted in equity and shared humanity. Indeed, in an unpublished manuscript, he wrote that conversations (“learned discussions”) with his British colleagues often drove him “into spiritual solitude,” and that he much preferred engaging with people outside the colonial administration.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W. Baker-Beall, “Annual Report, Southern Turkana, 1931,” 15.

¹⁶⁷ After his departure in 1933, his replacement, Walter A. Perreau, complained that the Turkana Tribal Police had a “poor” knowledge of Kiswahili “largely because of Mr. Baker-Beall always talking to them in Turkana.” KNA-DC/TURK/3/2, W.A. Perreau, “Handing Over Report: Mr. W.A. Perreau, District Commissioner of Southern Turkana to Mr. R.P. Platt, District Commissioner of Northern Turkana, 1933,” 2.

¹⁶⁸ KNA-DC/TURK/3/1: Letter from M.W.F.P. Kelly to Chief Native Affairs Commissioner, 15 January 1945, 1.

¹⁶⁹ KNA-DC/TURK/3/1: R.W. Baker-Beall, “Teleki’s Volcano, 1888-1932,” 16

And it was because of this extensive travel that Baker-Beall became the first British official to note the rapidly deteriorating climate in the district. In 1931, the provincial commissioner, Arthur M. Champion, relied on Baker-Beall's monthly reports to notify Nairobi that "the Lake [Rudolf (Turkana)] level has dropped and is dropping, that the rainfall is decreasing, and that the grazing areas are slowly and steadily decreasing, being replaced by vast expanses of bare, hard soil often littered with stones and gravel."¹⁷⁰ And in 1932, Baker-Beall's extensive travel allowed him to thoroughly document the severity of a drought that was ravaging the district. [See introduction for more detail.] Although previous district commissioners had been sure to note climatological issues and the comment on the status of herds, Baker-Beall was the only one who featured the voices of indigenous residents in his reports, and his larger goal was to place these events within their historical context and highlight the human toll of these environmental conditions.

Indeed, it was Baker-Beall who first made the argument that the Turkana ethnic group was a relatively recent arrival in the land then known as the District of Southern Turkana. Using nineteenth months-worth of interviews, Baker-Beall constructed a case that:

The history of the District was one of continual movement and expansion South and East at the expenses of their [the Turkana's] neighbors. From the records of the K.A.R. it would appear that the Ngiturkana themselves arrived with singularly little stock....

The natural conclusion is that the Ngiturkana, with their small herds, living on raided stock, largely pasturing in the Suk and Samburu Uplands [areas outside the district] would neither have noticed that Southern Turkana was insufficient to meet their grazing needs; nor, indeed, felt the need for such grazing.

It was only when their activities were circumscribed; when they found that the area which had been a stepping stone to the highlands was to be their home; that their stock had to be pastured on these arid plains, and not on the adjoining grassy plateau; that the Ngiturkana began to talk of the 'good old days.'

¹⁷⁰ KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: A.M. Champion, "Annual Report, Turkana Province, 1931," 5-6.

Though it is admissible that, at the time of their original entry, in this uninhabited, untouched country there may have been a fairly plentiful supply of grass, enough at least to satisfy the needs of passers-by, I do not believe that there ever was, nor ever can be sufficient grazing in Southern Turkana to keep even a small section of its present population from starving.¹⁷¹

I quote Baker-Beall's history at length in order to highlight how remarkably accurate this account is when compared with those collected and written by professional historians and folklorists.¹⁷² Indeed, by spending so much of his time at barazas located beyond the district headquarters, he was able to truly understand the ways in which the interplay between climate change and the policies of the colonial administration were hurting the individuals who made the district their home.

More importantly still, these experiences allowed the Baker-Beall to develop a sense of empathy for the people who, like him, occupied the same land. "When one considers their country," Baker-Beall wrote, "one is reminded again of honey in a carcass."¹⁷³ And indeed, Baker-Beall, in his final annual report—the one that called for a twenty-year tax abatement—described in detail how challenging the land is:

The year may be divided into three portions. From the opening of November to the close of January, there is singularly little ill health. One sees only an occasional mosquito and though hot, there is normally a sufficient breeze to keep the air in circulation.

With the beginning of February commence a long series of dust-storms and dust devils....[described in introduction]

¹⁷¹ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall "Appendix IV: A Consideration of the Economic Condition of the Ngiturkana especially in relation to their ability to pay Hut-Tax," in "Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1932," 10. See also KNA-DC/TURK/3/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, "Ref. Frontier Tribes," December 5, 1932, 4.

¹⁷² I am thinking, here, of John Lamphear, "The People of the Grey Bull: The Origin and Expansion of the Turkana," *The Journal of African History* 29, no. 1 (1988): 27-39 and Mustafa Kemal Mirzeler, *Remembering Nyaeche and the Gray Bull Engiro: African Storytellers of the Karamoja Plateau and the Plains of Turkana* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

¹⁷³ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W. Baker-Beall, "Annual Report, Southern Turkana, 1932," 2.

With April come the rains and shortly following them a heavy infestation of mosquitos...The type of fever they bring is peculiarly virulent and persistent...During these months [April to November] it is necessary to take the greatest precautions. Fever can be warded off to some extent by retiring beneath one's net at 6:00pm and not rising until sunrise....

The sun, isolation, and squatted housing conditions; added to the complete absence of many necessary forms of food have an injurious effect on the health....

It is possible to say that an officer in the course of administrative service...must take the good with the bad. But one grain of strychnine is equally poisonous whether concealed in 1oz or one hundred weight of meat.¹⁷⁴

To say that Baker-Beall hated the district would not be accurate. "There are many compensations in the comparatively unknown nature of the country [and] the exceptionally attractive type of native with whom one has to deal," he wrote.¹⁷⁵ However, he did find the district to be climatologically unsuited to human life. The heat, the lack of water, the intense sunlight—all of it overwhelmed him. He could neither cope with these climactic conditions on their own nor their environmental and human that they instigated (e.g. drought, famine, etc.) Nevertheless, with the exception of his annual report from 1932—which he wrote less than a month before he was scheduled to leave the district—he kept most of these opinions to himself.

Prevented (by professional decorum) from officially expressing his bewilderment at the environment and his empathy for the people who were forced by the colonial administration to live there, Baker-Beall began to express his thoughts about the district. And indeed, it was in the early months of 1932—the year that the drought began—that a dramatic shift occurs in his

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-10.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

photography. It becomes, one, more technically proficient, and two, it morphs from banal documentary shots into something more expressive. A far cry from the shaky, superficial photography of his first months in the district, Baker-Beall's works from 1932 are moody and atmospheric. They feature strong horizon lines, deep foregrounds, clear orthogonals, and an emphasis on the contrast between light and dark. They are also almost always devoid of life. Absent any human, animal, or vegetal life, there is only the land. And in the rare instances in which organic matter is depicted it almost always set against a vast and desolate backdrop. The focus, first and foremost, is on the land. These are immense works, photographs that highlight the wildness and intensity of land and that express the folly of British colonization efforts.¹⁷⁶

The photographs from his longest safari—a two-month mapping expedition to, from, and around Teleki's Volcano on the southwestern shore of Lake Turkana (Rudolf)—typify this style and represent Baker-Beall's largest extant series from his time in Southern Turkana. Although ostensibly undertaken for the purposes of geographical study, the vast majority of Baker-Beall's photographs from this journey are curiously unhelpful when it comes to explicating the details of the land. Take the previously-discussed *The Kerio Floors*-. Shot in a previously-unexplored area in the remote, southeastern corner of the District of Southern Turkana, the region had never before been visited or mapped by the British. Bounded to the south by the mouth of Kerio River, to the north by Mt. Tiroko, to the west by the Suguta River,

¹⁷⁶ It is easy to see the parallels between Baker-Beall's photography and nineteenth century American landscape painting, particularly that which depicts the American west. However, whereas the American landscape painters were attempting to depict a lush, primeval world that was ripe for exploitation and expansion, Baker-Beall's photographs showcase a primeval world without any natural resources worth exploiting. His landscapes are not places you would want to go to. For references to American landscape painting see, for instance, Angela Miller, "Albert Bierstadt, Landscape Aesthetics, and the Meaning of the West in the Civil War Era," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 27 (2001): 40-59 and Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

and to the east by the Samburu Hills, the region is a hostile place, a barren place—a location that, prior to Baker-Beall’s arrival on October 15, 1932, was thought to be nothing more than a vast desert of sand.¹⁷⁷ It was, in short, the very sort of place that the geographically-minded Champion would have wanted his officers to record and map. And indeed, in his official safari report, Baker-Beall takes great care to describe, in excruciating detail, every hill, valley, rock, and riverbed within sight. Yet, curiously, the one photograph that Baker-Beall took of the region, *The Kerio Floors*, contains none of the wealth of geographical detail that made it into either his written report or his deputy’s hand-drawn map. Indeed, rather than focusing on landmark features that would aid geographers in producing more faithful maps of the region, Baker-Beall aimed his camera at what lay between them, choosing to capture what he described as the “gradually sloping field of ash and cinder fragments.”¹⁷⁸

And that at least is a photograph that has some relationship to the geographical mapping that the district commissioner was officially meant to be doing on the expedition to Teleki’s Volanco. More common are works like *Cobwebby Tree at Amiarangan (W. Shore of Lake Rudolf)* [Figure 3.5], *Dark Tower (An Ancient Ash Crater, And Sand Dunes in the Suguta Valley)* [Figure 3.6], and *Mapping at Amiarangan* [Figure 3.7]. All of these photographs textually frame their existence within an institutionally-sanctioned framework: mapping and surveying. However, like *The Kerio Floors*, they do little actual work in advancing that administrative task. The location of Amiarangan, for instance, is not mentioned in any of the written surveys

¹⁷⁷ KNA-DC/TURK/3/1: R.W. Baker-Beall, “Safari Report of Mr. R.W. Baker-Beall and Mr. N.F. Kennaway through the South and South West of Lake Turkana,” 5.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

conducted by Baker-Beall or Nathan Kennaway, his assistant district commissioner. And the Suguta Valley is a location that spans over a hundred square miles, making a photographic description such as the one embedded in that photograph's title useless.

Robin Kelsey has argued that survey photographs are created within realms of “fractional authorship,” worlds where “pictorial meaning” comes from both “personal expression” and “institutional power.”¹⁷⁹ This sort of “archive style” is clearly evident in Baker-Beall's photography from 1932. Although the origins of these works lie in the predilections of Baker-Beall's direct supervisor—Arthur M. Champion, the geography-obsessed Provincial Commissioner of Turkana Province—Baker-Beall molded the requirements the medium to suit his personal goals and objectives. And indeed, based on their relative uselessness when it comes to actually surveying the land of Southern Turkana, I argue that the real goal of these photographs is to give physical, ‘documentary’ form to Baker-Beall's belief that the district was unfit for human occupancy.

This, of course, is clearly evidenced in the subject matter depicted in each of the 1932 works I have mentioned. *Mapping at Amiarangan* shows only errant scrub brush. *Cobwebby Tree at Amiarangan* depicts trees that appear to have died (or that soon will). And *Dark Tower* contains not a single discernable cell of organic matter among the waves of sand that stretch into the distance. Moreover, the composition of each of these works are designed to amplify the notion of a district filled with vast, lifeless, and inhospitable tracts of land. The high horizon lines and relatively homogenous sepia tones of each work give this away. By framing the images

¹⁷⁹ Robin Kelsey, *Archive Style: Photographs and Illustrations for U.S. Surveys, 1850-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 16.

so that the objects in the foreground—the most detailed elements in the work—are engulfed by both a homogenous foreground and middleground, the young district commissioner is able to amplify the depth of the photographed land. And this, in turn, heightens the emotional response of the images.¹⁸⁰ And indeed, looking at these images it is hard not to feel a shiver down the back of one’s spine. These are sublime works, photographs that are intentionally designed to evoke feelings of dread and terror. What, after all, could be more terrifying than the idea of being trapped in a land that can evidently not support human life?

At the same time that Baker-Beall was taking photographs like these, he was also struggling with how to deal with the human consequences of the district’s exponentially worsening drought and famine. At the time, what was desperately needed throughout the district was fresh grazing. And that was the one thing Baker-Beall was not in a position to provide. Nor were the Turkana in a position to take it for themselves. Like most Africans throughout Britain’s vast African empire, Turkana families had been severely restricted in their movements by the colonial state. What had initially begun as an attempt to enforce the international borders arbitrarily created during Africa’s partitioning, had, over the following decades, morphed into a draconian system of ‘native reserves’ and ‘passbooks’ that’s purpose was to restrict the free movement of Africans within the colony. Similar in form and philosophy to the infamous homelands of South Africa’s Apartheid state, colonial Kenya was divided into twenty-four ‘tribal

¹⁸⁰ Indeed, the nineteenth-century British art theorist John Gibson Macvicar hypothesized that horizon lines, when staged in the right way are perhaps the most effective formal ways to evoke the feeling of what he called “sublimity.” See John Gibson Macvicar, *On the Beautiful, the Picturesque, and the Sublime* (London: Scott, Webster, and Geary, 1837), 115-130.

reserves' populated almost exclusively by members of individual ethnic groups.¹⁸¹ The Samburu lived in Samburu District. The Suk [Pokot] in West Suk [Pokot]. The Turkana were confined across the Districts of Northern and Southern Turkana.¹⁸² And so on and so forth. Any African seeking to leave these reserves was required to carry a passbook known as a *kipande*, which contained the person's name, ethnic group, past employment history, and current employer's signature, or be granted written permission from the administrator of the area they were entering. Indeed, in the case of the Southern Turkana, the region was officially closed, having been designated a closed district on May 30, 1906.¹⁸³

Designed to force Africans—notably, the Kikuyu of central Kenya—into the labor force, the cruelty and inhumanity of this policy was felt with particular intensity by pastoralists in the northern regions of the country.¹⁸⁴ For unlike their southern agriculturalist neighbors, ethnic groups like the Turkana, Pokot, Samburu, Rendille, and Gabra relied on unrestricted movement for their very survival. Indeed, given the intermittent and oftentimes uneven rain fall throughout northern Kenya, families and herds traversed vast expanses of territory in a single

¹⁸¹ This process began in 1915 with the Crown Land Ordinance, which set-up separate areas of land for African residents and was cemented into the ethnically regimented system that was in place until the end of the colonial era by an administrative 'gazetting' in 1926. See Berman, *Control & Crisis in Colonial Kenya*: 150-151.

¹⁸² From the beginning of civil administration in 1926, there had been debate as to whether or not to restrict the movement of Turkana sections to the region where they had 'traditionally' been located within the districts of northern and southern Turkana. Ultimately, in October 1929, it was decided to allow Turkana of all sections the "free and unrestricted movement in their search for grazing and water and that they should not be bound in any way by any artificial and arbitrary boundary which might be made for administrative convenience." See KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: H.A. Carr, "Annual Report, Southern Turkana, 1929," 5.

¹⁸³ KNA-PC/RVP/2/5/1: D.R. Crampton, "Appendix to Annual Report for Turkana and Suk Districts, 1918-1919," 2.

¹⁸⁴ Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 15

year in search of grazing and watering holes for their herd animals.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, in times of ecological trauma—such as during multi-year droughts—Turkana families would oftentimes travel large distances to acquire food from their southern agricultural neighbors.¹⁸⁶ The ethnic group is considered by many to be “one of the world’s most mobile peoples” and to thus restrict these movement to arbitrary borders that bore no relationship to the geological or ecological realities was, in a very real way, to consign these populations to almost certain death.¹⁸⁷

This is perhaps best exemplified by the drought of the early 1930s. Although comparatively greener pastures existed to north, south, and west of the region, the Turkana families who had been assigned to the Southern District were barred from entering them, and their administrator—their representative to the colonial administration in Nairobi—could do little more than beg his counterparts for assistance that would most likely not be forthcoming. Crossing the northern border into southern Abyssinia, for instance, would have been seen as an act of aggression by both the autochthonous Dassanech (Marille) and the armies of by Ras Tafari Haile Selassi and was thus strictly off limits. Indeed, both the King’s African Rifles (K.A.R.) and the administration of the District of Northern Turkana heavily patrolled the border, which was known colloquially as the Red Line.¹⁸⁸ Any Turkana family or herd who crossed it would

¹⁸⁵ One anthropologist, Anders Grum, tracked the movements of one Rendille family over the course of 21 years and estimated that, during that time, the family traveled over 100,000 miles. Cited in Prussin, *African Nomadic Architecture*, 35; 227.

¹⁸⁶ Jeremy Lind, “Adaptation, Conflict, and Cooperation in Pastoralist East Africa: A Case Study from South Turkana, Kenya,” *Conflict, Security, and Development* 3, no. 3 (2003): 326-327; see also Spencer, *Nomads in Alliance*, 1973.

¹⁸⁷ Terrence McCabe, *Cattle Bring Us to Our Enemies*, 236

¹⁸⁸ See, for example, KNA-DC/TURK/4/4: A.M. Champion, “Monthly Intelligence Report, Turkana Province, May and June 1933,” 4.

have been severely fined, and perhaps even imprisoned by the colonial administration. Meanwhile, to the west, lay the British Protectorate of Uganda which, though part of Britain's colonial empire, was nevertheless a separate political entity. Crossing its border required both advance notification and written permission from the district commissioner of Karamoja—the adjacent district—which was unlikely to come given the frosty relationship that existed between the two colonies. More importantly still, the District of Karamoja was far from any European's idea of lush and its district commissioner had to protect what little grazing there was for his own autochthonous pastoralists, the Karamojong (whose relationship with the Turkana was, in the very best of circumstances, strained). The district's best hope thus lay within the Protectorate, to the south, in the District of Samburu. Yet, as was the case with Uganda's District of Karamoja, the District Commissioner of Samburu District wished to preserve the grazing lands for the residents of his own district—a decision motivated as much by genuine affection for the people of the region as it was by a desire to avoid conflict between the two ethnic groups, whose mutual cattle raiding had only recently been curtailed by the colonial state.

With nowhere to go except into the saline, crocodile-infested waters of the easterly Lake Turkana, the residents of the Southern Turkana were thus trapped in this tract of inhospitable, unforgiving land. And they were rapidly dying. Indeed, by the conclusion of the drought in early 1934, it would be estimated that at least half of all living things—humans, animals, and plants—in the district had died during the preceding four years.¹⁸⁹ And Baker-Beall

¹⁸⁹ This death toll was first speculated to be fifty percent in KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: A.M. Champion, "Annual Report for the Province of Turkana, 1932," 24—when the drought was still in full swing—and remained unchanged at its conclusion according to Provincial Champion. See KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: A.M. Champion, "Annual Report for the

had very little he could do about it. His one last resort was to convince both the Provincial Commissioner in Kapenguria and the Chief Native Affairs Commissioner in Nairobi to allow for the suspension of taxation for the duration of the drought and allow to Turkana to keep what few remaining stock animals they had left. What had begun as a mere suggestion following the end of *Lokwang* in April had, in the subsequent months, morphed into a firm commitment that only way to halt a death toll not seen in the region since before the advent of colonial rule was to eliminate the tax burden placed on these populations by the state.

In July, for instance, he wrote:

I am keeping certain statistics respecting the time occupied and labor entailed collecting from a people who can ill afford it, a sum scarcely amounting to 1000 pounds. I propose to make these the basis of a report asking that at least for 1933 the Ngiturkana be exempted from tax payment. I have come to the regretful conclusion that it is impossible to point to any direction in which their sacrificed in this respect either directly or indirectly benefit them. The District cannot now be said to be even on a maintenance basis and those small ways by which some small interest in their welfare and happiness could be shown have all had to be cut out. The Ngiturkana are a loyal and courageous people, but I fear that the present flogging of a willing horse will shortly mean only the flogging of a dead one.¹⁹⁰

And by December of that year, as he prepared what would ultimately be his final report on the affairs of the district, the one-year grace period that Baker-Beall had initially suggested had turned, quite stunningly, into a proposal to stop the flow of monies out of the district for twenty years:

Province of Turkana, 1933," 5. However, Nathan F. Kennaway, the Assistant District Commissioner of Southern Turkana, estimated that some of the larger species in the district—notably, cattle, had achieved a mortality rate of seventy-five percent. See KNA-DC/TURK/3/2: N.F. Kennaway, "Safari Report of N.F. Kennaway, 20 April 1933 to 25 April 1933," 2.

¹⁹⁰ KNA-DC/TURK/4/2: Baker-Beall, "Intelligence Report for July 1932," 2-3.

If it should prove possible to put into force the economies stated above, and substitute for the present tax of Shs.6/- a District levy of Shs.2/-, the proceeds of which could be used for the amelioration of Conditions, I think there might be a prospect of re-imposition of tax within twenty-years. If the present state of affairs continues there will, shortly, be neither the wherewithal to pay tax, nor the men to pay it.¹⁹¹

To understand the radicalism—or sheer lunacy—of this suggestion one must first understand the economic quagmire that the Protectorate and Colony of Kenya found itself in during Europe’s interwar period. Throughout the early twentieth century, investments in infrastructure and more effective control over African labor power had allowed the colony to rapidly expand its production of key cash crops like coffee, sisal, and maize, all of which were eagerly gobbled up by consumers and manufacturers in metropolitan England at a nearly exponential rate.¹⁹² Indeed, by 1929, the trade taxes from these industries alone accounted for over a quarter of the colony’s annual budget.¹⁹³ This economic specialization, however, opened the colony up to tremendous market risk, placing its financial security solely in the hands of international demand. Sir Edward Grigg, the governor of Kenya from 1925 to 1930, noted as much in his first speech to the Colony’s Legislative Council. “The Colony’s revenue system depends to a very large degree on Customs revenue,” he warned. “This is necessarily an

¹⁹¹ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall “Appendix IV: A Consideration of the Economic Condition of the Ngiturkana especially in relation to their ability to pay Hut-Tax,” in “Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1932,” 16.

¹⁹² Leigh Gardner, *Taxing Colonial Africa: The Political Economy of British Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 67.

¹⁹³ Board of Trade, *Statistical Abstract, 1924-30*; deflated using data from Feinstein, *Statistical Tables of National Income*, Table 61. Cited in Gardner, *Taxing Colonial Africa*, 64.

uncertain form of revenue. It is liable to fluctuate seriously, not only with the prosperity of the Colony itself, but with world-wide factors entirely beyond our control.”¹⁹⁴

Not long afterwards, Grigg’s apprehension over the fiscal health of the colony would look all-too prescient as the Great Depression ravaged the financial markets of both the Global North and South. As consumer demand for Kenyan raw materials rapidly contracted in the early 1930s, so too did the incomes of the small, but powerful class of British settlers who owned the vast majority of the exporting businesses operating in the colony. The government of Kenya thus found itself in a dire economic quagmire. Required by British law to remain fiscally self-sustaining, the colony was nevertheless faced with collapsing revenue from both trade and personal taxes. And so, the government turned its attention to its African population, raising tax rates to nearly draconian levels in an attempt to balance the colony’s annual budget. Said one official in 1937, if the taxation system currently practiced by the colony were introduced into West Africa it “would provoke an insurrection as surely as night follows day.”¹⁹⁵ Under this new regime, the job of field officers—the one hundred district commissioners and district officers stationed across the colony—transitioned from one concerned with law enforcement and the promotion of British ‘civilization’ into one focused almost solely on tax collection.¹⁹⁶ With the fiscal health of the colony at stake, these officers were ordered to do everything in

¹⁹⁴ Speech to the Legislative Council, 28 October 1925, published in Kenya Legislative Council, *Speeches of Edward Grigg*, cited in Gardner, *Taxing Colonial Africa*, 64.

¹⁹⁵ Cited in R.M.A. van Zwanenberg, *Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya, 1919-1939* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau), 102. It is important to note that, not eight years before this official’s statement, there were indeed tax riots throughout much of West Africa while at the rates already referred to by this administrator. See, for example, Judith Van Allen, “‘Sitting on a Man’: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 6, no.2 (1972): 165-181.

¹⁹⁶ Berman, *Control & Crisis*, 87.

their power to reduce the traditionally large number of tax avoiders in each district and ensure the full payment from the resident of each officer's district.¹⁹⁷

In the Districts of Northern and Southern Turkana, the effects of this increased focus on extracting tax revenue were felt with particular intensity given the nascent state of a capitalist, cash-based economy in the region. There was, for instance, no industry to speak of in either district, and, between 1926 and 1934, there are no recorded instances of a Turkana man, woman, or child leaving the territories to pursue employment opportunities. What little cash-based exchange there was consisted primarily of a handful—between seven and twelve—Somali traders who set up shops in Kaputir and Lodwar in order to buy cattle and other stock animals from a few wealthy Turkana families whose territorial movement brought them in contact with the traders.¹⁹⁸ And while these families would then use the cash to buy the few material goods they could not obtain through bartering or from the land, namely “maize meal, tobacco, amerikani, knives, beads, [and] wire,” on the whole, Turkana families at this time, had little use for money.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, nomadic pastoralism must be understood not merely as a lifestyle, but rather, as Peter Rigby and Elliot Fratkin have suggested, as a mode of production, one characterized by production for use (as opposed to exchange) and which exists in opposition to capitalism.²⁰⁰ And while colonial taxation was meant, in part, to instantiate the

¹⁹⁷ Gardner, *Taxing Colonial Africa*, 111-113.

¹⁹⁸ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, “Appendix IV: A Consideration of the Economic Condition of the Ngiturkana especially in relation to their ability to pay Hut-Tax,” in “Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1932,” 14.

¹⁹⁹ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: C.E.V. Buxton, “Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1927,” 5.

²⁰⁰ See Peter Rigby, *Persistent Pastoralists: Nomadic Societies in Transition* (London: Zed Books, 1985) and Elliot Fratkin, “The Organization of Labor and Production among the Ariaal Rendille, Nomadic Pastoralists of Northern Kenya” (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1987), 19-27

capitalist mode of production by driving Africans into the labor force and sparking entrepreneurship, the remoteness of Northern and Southern Turkana combined with its inability to ecologically support agriculture or other export-based industries doomed those efforts. As a result, despite the industrial advances made in the south of the colony, the ability of most Turkana families to pay a six-shilling tax in the 1930s was just about as high as their ability to pay a six-hundred-shilling tax.

To work around this, administrators in Northern and Southern Turkana developed a complicated system by which cattle and other stock animals were purchased from Turkana families using government funds set aside for staff rations.²⁰¹ These disbursements—which accounted for over a third of Southern Turkana’s annual budget—allowed Turkana families to satisfy their tax obligation and district officials to meet their collection estimates.²⁰² Of course, this system was far from perfect. From a purely fiscal point of view, this exercise was merely a time-consuming reshuffling of government money across budgetary spreadsheets and did little to spur either capitalist enterprise or the growth of a cash economy. Funds that were disbursed from the ‘Rations to Staff’ line item were all almost immediately returned—oftentimes on the same day—in the form of tax revenue.²⁰³ Few families sold more than was absolutely necessary to meet their tax burden for the simple reason that doing so would have further depleted the

²⁰¹ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, “Appendix IV: A Consideration of the Economic Condition of the Ngiturkana especially in relation to their ability to pay Hut-Tax,” in “Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1932,” 11-13.

²⁰² KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, “Appendix II: Expenditures and Savings,” in “Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1931”

²⁰³ For an illuminating description of how this worked in practice see AMNH-Rare Book Collection/42F/Box 2: Kepler Lewis, “Journal of a Safari in Turkana: The Morden Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History,” 133-135.

reserves of stock that they relied upon for both their physical and cultural survival. (And, really, there was nothing that they could buy with it.) In the harsh and unpredictable environment of northwestern Kenya, the best way to ward off starvation in times of drought and sustain the kinship systems that structured day-to-day life was to maintain large and diverse herds of cattle, goats, sheep, donkeys, and camels.²⁰⁴ To deplete those herds for the sole purpose of obtaining a few metal coins—which were accepted by less than a dozen individuals, half of them British officials—made very little economic sense in the world-view of most of the pastoralists in the region. Nevertheless, in the relatively fertile years of the late 1920s, when grass was plentiful and stock in surplus, this system made sense to the colonial administrators who developed it. Most families, the logic went, could spare a cow or two every year. But in the drought-stricken years of the early 1930s—when wealthy Turkana families were having to choose between starvation and paying their taxes and less fortunate individuals did not even have that option—administrators like Baker-Beall were faced with a decision: find a way to exempt families from their tax burden or strip what few animals were left from the district and preside over a governmentally-sanctioned genocide.

To make the case for the twenty-year tax abatement he described, Baker-Beall relied on an interplay between the strident language used in the Annual Report for 1932 and the photographs that he had taken over the course of that year. Many of these are images that had already been sent to Arthur Champion, the provincial commissioner. Indeed, they pepper the

²⁰⁴ Perhaps the best description of the centrality of cattle to Turkana kinship and cultural life is P.H. Gulliver, *The Family Herds: A Study of Two Pastoral Tribes, the Jie and the Turkana* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1955).

back pages of various safari reports and geographical surveys from 1932, revealing, in those contexts, the scientific information that Champion so desperately craved. However, divorced from language that would contextualize them within a broader environmental or socio-cultural narrative, they did little to showcase the increasingly desperate situation in the district.

All of this changed in December 1932. His health failing, his home leave approved, and his next assignment in place (Finance Secretary for Zanzibar), Baker-Beall had one month left to convince Champion to offer some form of economic relief to the men and women of Southern Turkana. And so, he structured his penultimate report—the district’s Annual Report, a document that holistically summarized the affairs of the district—in a way that would support his argument that relief was necessary. It is a document that uses both text and images to break down the provincial commissioner’s prejudice and forge a sense of empathy toward the indigenous men and women who forced to make Southern Turkana their home. Its rhetorical structure and the interplay between text and image make this clear.

The report begins with a summary of the challenging environment of the district and the resulting struggles of the British officers stationed there:

There are no permanent buildings, and, in consequence, there are no Government Quarters...The District is extremely unhealthy. To many officers its remoteness and loneliness must be a great burden. It is impossible to obtain with any certainty supplies of fresh and necessary foods such as butter. Even if purchased, it has been proved, over and over again, that these are likely to reach the Station in an un-eatable condition. The substitution of tinned goods is expensive, and, not particularly beneficial to health.

Provisions cannot be purchased personally. Consequently, one is prey to the carelessness and rapacity of the local shopkeepers.

Standing orders are neglected; goods are forwarded in uneatable condition, and their return is met with the unanswerable argument that they have gone wrong on the journey; articles are constantly supplied of a different quantity, quality, or description to that ordered. The underlying motive presumable is that something is so urgently

required that the substitutes will be gladly accepted, or the trouble is too great to warrant their return.

There is no social life, and no form of sport.²⁰⁵

Opening passages such as this one highlights the challenges faced by men of a similar race, position, and social class to the provincial commissioner and ask him to place himself within the district. Indeed, references to the lack of sport and the challenges of importing specific goods like butter (over, say, ghee) speak directly to a Britain's experience in northwestern Kenya. Baker-Beall had never before expressed such deeply personal feelings about the district; he had only commented on its effect on the indigenous residents of the district. And by beginning his report in this way, the district commissioner is able to begin the process of establishing empathy. After all, as numerous studies have shown, it is easier to feel the pain of those who are most like us.²⁰⁶

After these early pages—which, in a departure from established professional norms, focus largely on the individual experiences of Baker-Beall—the report turns its attention to the addressing the categories of information required by the colonial administration. It covers meteorological activity (low), recounts the state of the livestock trade (poor), discusses the presence (or, absence, really) of missionaries, and highlights a litany of other administrivia deemed relevant to assessing the state of the district (e.g. judicial activity, the state of tribal councils).

²⁰⁵ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, "Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1932," 19.

²⁰⁶ Sophie Trawalter, Kelly M. Hoffman, and Adam Waytz, "Racial Bias in the Perception of Others' Pain," *PLOSOne* 7, no. 11 (2012): e4586.

And while these sections go on for quite some time—the entire report is twenty-two pages long—it is nothing but a build up to the appendices, which clock in at thirty-five pages in length. Much of this length comes from the fourth appendix, of a sixteen-page tome titled “A Consideration of the Economic Condition of the Ngiturkana especially in relation to their ability to pay Hut-Tax.” It is by far the largest single section in the entire fifty-seven-page document, and it is, by far, the most strident document I read during my five months of research in colonial archives in Nairobi.

It begins by offering a blistering assessment of the colonial administration’s tax policy:

On two principle grounds, it does not appear that this tax is justifiable.

On grounds of equity: One presumes that the prime reason for taxation is the conference of benefits to the taxpayers. It is difficult to see what direct benefits the Mturkaneit acquires from Government administration. There are no educational facilities; no agricultural instructors; no Public Works Department’s roads. There are no Bridges; no money is available for the regeneration of the land; and there are not even sufficient funds to entertain a yearly Baraza....

The District is peacefully governed but whether this is regarded as an advantage by the Ngiturkana is doubtful, especially in view of the fact that the attainment of this result has meant the block of all roads of expansion and wealth.

On economic grounds there appears little to be said in favor of the tax.²⁰⁷

From there, the report details the complex structures put in place to make “tax collection” possible, highlighting both how ridiculous it was from an administrative standpoint and, more importantly, how cruel it was considering the deteriorating environment of the district. Baker-Beall then concludes with the following plea:

It is very much regretted that the outlining of the position has occupied so much space.

²⁰⁷ KNA-DC/TURK/1/2: R.W.C. Baker-Beall, “Appendix IV: A Consideration of the Economic Condition of the Ngiturkana especially in relation to their ability to pay Hut-Tax,” in “Annual Report for the District of Southern Turkana, 1932,” 10-11.

At the same time, it must be realized that the position is a serious one.

Further extraction of tax from the Ngiturkana would be cruel. To obtain tax in 1932 it was necessary to make the maximum holding of stock for exemption four head of goats and sheep. [Meaning families with five or more heads of stock had to pay taxes.] The number of paupers is increasing year by year. There are of course many flagrant instances of deception and many false pleas of poverty, as there always must be with tax payers, native or European.

The fact remains that one can only admire the blind sense of duty—certainly not fear—which prompts the Ngiturkana to drive their stock 200 miles, in the hopes of finding a purchaser at Kaputir; rather than suffer the indignity of being called in for failure to pay tax.

If it should prove possible to put into force the economies stated above, and substitute for the present tax of Shs. 6/- a District levy of Shs. 2/-, the proceeds of which could be used for the amelioration of Conditions, I think that there might be a prospect of reimposition of tax within twenty years. If the present state of affairs continues, there will shortly be neither the wherewithal to pay tax, nor the men to pay it.²⁰⁸

All of these words, however, play second fiddle to the photographs included in the report. After all, Baker-Beall had communicated the many of these sorts of messages before—albeit in much more understated language. Rather, what makes this report demonstrably different from those that came before is in the inclusion of photographs that specifically depict lifeless and inhospitable tracts of land. Familiar to Champion because of their inclusion in earlier geographical documents, these images are re-framed and re-interpreted by the text of the report, transformed from scientific documents into a form of visual propaganda.

And indeed, each of the twenty-two works included in the report build on one another and work together to establish both a narrative and a state of mind. Over the course of six pages—each of which features between three and four photographs—Baker-Beall visually argues for the inhospitable nature of the district. The first two pages feature landscapes that

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

are completely devoid of organic life. Drawn from the stockpile of photographs from the expedition to Teleki's volcano images such *Teleki's Volcano and its Lava Flow* [Figure 3.8] and *Interior in the Circular Cone of the Lake. South Island visible in the extreme left background* [Figure 3.9] serve as potent reminders of the harsh and lifeless terrain found throughout the district. In these precipitous scenes of volcanic rock, shot from on high as a way of increasing the drama of scene, one is presented with a palpable sense of danger. Moreover, given that Champion had accompanied Baker-Beall on this particular mapping expedition, they serve as an important reminder of his time in district, which he had, at one point, described as "arid, sandy, and forbidding."²⁰⁹

From there, Baker-Beall then transitions to a series of photographs that are intended to showcase normal, daily life in the district in 1932. *The Best Grazing in Chief Abong's Territory* [Figure 3.10] and *Kaputir Water Supply. Sand well in the Turkwel River Bed* [Figure 3.11] are representative of this middle section, which spans four pages. Although far from empty, these works depict landscapes that could not be read by European as anything but challenging. *The Best Grazing* showcases a sparse assortment of thorny, leafless brush spread across a sandy landscape, one that, through the caption is linked to the district's most supportive chief. More distressingly still, *Kaputir Water Supply* depicts a deep, empty hole in a bone dry river bed. Yet by pairing these images with captions that use banal, unexceptional language, Baker-Beall constructs a new normal for the district.

And with this established, Baker-Beall's photographic 'evidence' concludes with images that bring the narrative arc of the report full circle. In the final two pages of photographs,

²⁰⁹ KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: A.M. Champion, "Annual Report, Turkana Province, 1932," 11.

Baker-Beall returns to Kaptuir, the district headquarters, including scenes of his daily life. Indeed, *Officer's House in Kaputir as seen from the New Offices* [Figure 3.12] and *6.00pm. Retreat* [Figure 3.13] resemble the earliest texts found in the Annual Report for 1932. These images showcase the trappings of the colonial administration—buildings and tribal police—dwarfed by a monochromatic, and largely lifeless landscape.

Taken together, these photographs construct a convincing narrative for Champion, the provincial commissioner and intended recipient. Indeed, by eliminating human beings from the landscape, Baker-Beall was able to get around the racist and paternalistic stereotypes of the colonial system. These are not photographs that ask the reader to empathize with an othered subject who is placed within the scene. No, what they do is give the viewer an opportunity to place themselves within the land, to transform themselves into a subject who is affected by environment and climate of the photograph. And though sublime works are thought to be pleasurable to viewers, that is only because of distance. Said Edmund Burke, in his classic 1757 work *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*:

The passions which belong to self-preservation turn on pain and danger; they are simply painful when their causes immediately affect us; they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger, without actually being in such circumstances...²¹⁰

However, for Champion, the recipient of the report, the distance required for sublime pleasure was not possible. Based in nearby Kapenguria, the headquarters of Turkana Province and West Suk District, Champion was situated in an environment very much like that of Southern Turkana. Although far lusher when compared with the latter district—Kapenguria

²¹⁰ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: R and J Dodsley, 1757), 32.

received an average of forty inches of rain a year in the 1920s and 30s—the provincial headquarters was located in a region defined as an arid savannah and populated by nomadic pastoralists.²¹¹ And as such, the distance required for the pleasure of the sublime to take hold was foreclosed. Far enough away to not be immediately threatened by these scenes, but close enough to understand them, the impact of these works on Champion would have been profound.

The psychologist Irene Bruna Seu and linguist Lynne Cameron have demonstrated that empathy works according to what they term “the goldilocks principle.” If there is too much distance from the effected person or persons—either through physically (e.g. space) or mentally (e.g. racism)—than empathy is impossible. On the flip side, if one is too close to a person experiencing a traumatic event, then empathy is also foreclosed; individuals are more focused on their safety than the pain of others. Empathy, they argue, is most frequently provoked when a person or persons are near enough to be seen and understood but far enough away to not invade personal space.²¹²

And it is this principle that makes the photographs Baker-Beall included in the Annual Report for 1932 effective in making the case for tax relief. Although you and I look at these photographs and feel a rush of sublime pleasure, to their intended audience they would be all too real. Moreover, by eliminating almost all images of the indigenous Turkana who occupied the land—an odd choice for a man who was clearly so enmeshed in their lives—Baker-Beall

²¹¹ KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: A.M. Champion, “Annual Report, Turkana Province, 1931,” 22.

²¹² Lynne Cameron and Irene Bruna Seu, “Landscapes of Empathy: Spatial Scenarios, Metaphors and Metonymies in Response to Distant Suffering,” *Text & Talk* 32, no. 3 (2012): 299.

both visually demonstrated that the land was actually uninhabitable and also foreclosed the possibility that racism, prejudice, and stereotypes would cloud the judgment of Champion, the report's intended recipient and the person who could authorize such tax relief.

As I have argued elsewhere, traumatic images have the ability to dismantle the social divisions erected by people by nationality, race, and distance.²¹³ And that is exactly what happened here. After reading Baker-Beall's report, Champion recommends to his superiors in Nairobi that collecting tax in 1933 "would not be possible to advisable," owing both to the desperate condition of the district's men and women and to the backbreaking work of tax collection in the district.²¹⁴

The landscape architect Anne Whiston Spirn has argued that landscapes—and the experiences that humans share in them—"make connections among seemingly disparate things and inspire the next act."²¹⁵ This chapter has used photography to trace Baker-Beall's nineteen-month career in the District of Southern Turkana and demonstrated the relationship between his increasing movement within the land of district and his empathy toward the indigenous population. Moreover, by analyzing these photographic images the chapter has shown that, as Baker-Beall's experience with the land and its precarious climate deepened, so too did his belief that colonial policy towards the District was fundamentally flawed. Thus transformed, he used

²¹³ Kevin Tervalá, "The Radical Cosmopolitanism of Barthélemy Toguó," *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 44, no. 1 (2019): 120-131.

²¹⁴ KNA-DC/TURK/1/4: A.M. Champion, "Annual Report, Turkana Province, 1931," 23.

²¹⁵ Anne Whiston Spirn, "'One with Nature': Landscape, Language, Empathy, and Imagination," in *Landscape Theory*, eds. James Elkins and Rachel Ziady DeLue (London: Routledge, 2008), 64.

these images as a way to successfully argue for some sort of relief from the colonial administration's tax policy.

CONCLUSION

The Coming Drought

The world is on fire. And for once, that is not just a metaphor. As I sit at my desk in Baltimore—attempting to somehow conclude this three-year research project—I have just heard on the news that the temperature in Alaska has hit 90 degrees Fahrenheit for the first time in recorded history.²¹⁶ This, on top of iceless Arctic waterways, mega-fires sweeping across whole continents, and dire reports that clouds will disappear from the sky within the next hundred years.²¹⁷ It's the end of the world as we know it. Or maybe it's just the end.

For me and members of my generation, it certainly feels like the latter. My boyfriend has delayed saving for retirement. ("We'll probably all be dead by the time it matters.") My friends interested in reproducing are debating the ethics bringing children into the world. And I am wondering if there is a point to finishing this dissertation given what is to come. Studies, after all, are not encouraging. The number of people fleeing desiccating farmland is exploding, entire islands are being swallowed up by the sea, and evidence shows that we are living in the middle of (i.e. causing) our planet's sixth major extinction event.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Mike Baker, "Alaska Has Never Reached Ninty Degrees. That Changed This Week," *The New York Times* July 4, 2019: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/04/us/alaska-heat-anchorage-fireworks.html>.

²¹⁷ "Melting Arctic ice opens new route from Europe to east Asia," *The Guardian*, September 28, 2018: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/28/melting-arctic-ice-opens-new-route-from-europe-to-east-asia>; Scott Sayre, "There Will Always be Fires," *Harper's Magazine* August (2018): 32-40; and Natalie Wolchover, "A World Without Clouds," *Quanta Magazine* February (2019): <https://www.quantamagazine.org/cloud-loss-could-add-8-degrees-to-global-warming-20190225/#>.

²¹⁸ Somni Sangupta, "Heat, Hunger, and War Force Africans Onto a Road of Fire," *The New York Times*, December 15, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/15/world/africa/agadez-climate-change.html?rref=collection%2Fspotlightcollection%2Fclimate-casualties&action=click&contentCollection=science®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=collection; Mike Ives, "A Remote Pacific Island Threatened by Rising Seas," *The New York*

The existential angst in which I have just indulged is, of course, a sign of my own privilege. For starters, I am alive. The ravages of climate change—the hurricanes, the droughts, the floods—have not killed me and my hand-wringing. I am also cocooned by my nationality, geographic location, and socio-economic status. Climate change has arrived, but, for me, it largely lives on the broadsheets of newspaper and the endless scroll of my Twitter feed. My worries can thus live uneasily in the future conditional. At least for now. My time will come. But today is not that day.

Unfortunately, this is not the case for billions of people around the world. For those who live in what we today call the Global South climate change is already a clear and present danger. As has often been the case throughout modern history, the actions of those of us in the Global North—in this case, the runaway consumption of carbon—have led to disastrous effects that are felt hardest and most immediately by the array of formerly colonized nations whom we in North have consistently exploited. Indeed, for most of the time that I was researching this dissertation, northwestern Kenya was once again being devastated by a series of droughts, droughts that brought with them widespread famine and displacement.²¹⁹ Said Joseph Ekimomor, a sixty-three-year-old from Kalokol (the site of the first famine relief camp in what was then Turkana District): “I don’t know what climate change is, but I know from all the

Times, July 3, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/world/asia/climate-change-kiribati.html?rref=collection%2Fspotlightcollection%2Fclimate-casualties&action=click&contentCollection=science®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=collection; Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2014).

²¹⁹ Nanjala Nyabola, “Kenya’s Thirsty Year,” *Guernica*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.guernicamag.com/kenyas-thirsty-year/>

changes—the constant droughts, the seasons are gone—these are changes happening to our land. Our life is becoming hard, and we can't do anything.”

Given this deluge of disaster, which seems to metastasize with each subsequent year, it can easy to be slide into nihilism. The writer Roy Scranton summarized the situation succinctly enough when he declared: We're fucked...The odds of [human] civilization surviving is negligible.”²²⁰ Yet, in spite of this catastrophizing, Scranton and I both believe that hope is not lost. (I have, after all, finished this dissertation.) The challenge, it seems, is, one, to slow the effects of climate change while, two, preparing ourselves for the likely scenario that the current iteration of human civilization is not long for this world. How do we adapt as people, as a species, to the end of life as we know it? To, again, quote Scranton:

We have failed to prevent unmanageable global warming and that global capitalist civilization as we know it is already over, but...humanity can survive and adapt to the new world of the Anthropocene if we accept human limits and transience as fundamental truths, and work to nurture the variety and richness of our collective heritage...Learning to die as a civilization means letting go of this particular way of life and its ideas of identity, freedom, success, and progress.²²¹

The question of how, exactly, to do this is slightly more complicated. Scranton, for his part, provides little assistance in this matter. This dissertation proposes that the best way of learning how to move forward, is to look to the past. Put more specifically, it argues that we should be looking to the non-western past. Indeed, as Jean and John L. Comaroff have argued, neoliberal economic conditions have allowed the Global South to develop “a privileged insight

²²⁰ Roy Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2015), 27.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

into the workings of the world at large,” insights that “prefigure the futures of the global north.”²²² The same can certainly be said of climate change.

As this project has shown, the phenomenon of climate change began to make its presence known in northwestern Kenya in the early-to-middle part of the twentieth century. The desiccating grasslands, the rising temperatures, the vanishing rivers, the increasingly sporadic rainfall—all can be linked to the warming globe. Accordingly, northwestern Kenya provides an excellent case study for those Americans seek to understand what our lives might look like in the coming future. The comparison is event salient because, at the same time that the men and women who lived in the district were responding to climate change, they were also responding to the effects of a bumbling and insidious bureaucracy of the British colonial. Truly, the parallels between late colonial Kenya and the present-day Euro-American world could not be more profound.

And, as such, it is my sincere hope that this project—in addition to adding to the slim academic literature on eastern African art and showcasing the dynamism of Turkana-made art and material culture—will provide some degree of comfort to the (admittedly few) people who will read it. Indeed, speaking personally, the process of researching and writing this project has proven to be profoundly comforting. My existential angst has, for extended periods, been settled by looking at the arcing, monochromatic containers, the bold, beguiling shields, and the haunting, affective photographs that I have discussed in this dissertation. Though it is far from a complete picture of all artistic or creative activity in late colonial Turkana (and it was not

²²² Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 1.

intended to be), what I hope this project has done is to showcase the resilience of the human spirit in the face of steep challenges and insurmountable odds. Art does not die in an age of climactic catastrophe. Creativity does not wither in the pounding heat of the sun. Rather, as was the case in all other periods of human existence, human creativity morphs and evolves. The forms alter, the materials change, the construction processes update—but art, that is to say the ineffable expression of the human mind, does not die.

The objects presented, discussed, analyzed, and—most critically—historicized in this dissertation bear this out. As I have shown, the twin irruptions of colonialism and climate change altered and re-wrote the scripts of social life in the district. However, they did not cause an irrevocable rupture in the art works produced in the district. Although the people who produced them—whether they were indigenous or non-indigenous—were living very different lives than they had in the past, these social shifts brought about formal evolutions, not totalizing changes. Although certain new forms and materials began to appear in the region’s artworks, each of these were incorporated into pre-existing artistic genres.

Ultimately, then, what results from this research is a dissertation that makes three major contributions to the field of African art history. First, it provides the first historical account of Turkana artistic production, periodizing it into two periods, that which came before the imposition of British civil administration in 1926 and that which came after. Second, it showcases the ways in which the physical world (*vis-à-vis* climate change) instantiated various formal changes in the artworks of the region. And finally, the thesis adds to a growing literature in African art history, one that sees the colonial period less as a time of rupture and the death of tradition and more as another era in which various forces—social, political, economic,

cultural, environmental, etc.—interacted to produce formal transformations in the art and material culture of a given region.

Illustrations



Figure 0.1
Unidentified artist
Unmarried Girl's Necklace, pre-1960s
Turkana region, Kenya
Hide, string, glass beads
The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1994.278



Figure 1.1

Unidentified artist
Shield (Front), pre-1912
Turkana region, Kenya
Leather, metal, wood

University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, AF2888



Figure 1.2

Unidentified artist
Shield (Front), pre-1960s
Turkana region, Kenya
Leather, metal, wood

Gift of Nancy and Robert H. Nooter, The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1994.272



Figure 1.3

Unidentified artist
Shield (Back), pre-1912
Turkana region, Kenya
Leather, metal, wood

University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, AF2888



Figure 1.4

A. Mielichhofer

Three Turkana Men

1888

Etching

Reproduced in Ludwig von Höhnel, *Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie: A Narrative of Samuel Teleki's Exploring and Hunting Expedition in Eastern Equatorial Africa in 1887 & 1888*. Volume II, 1894.



Figure 1.5
Unidentified artist
Shield (Back), pre-1960s
Turkana region, Kenya
Leather, metal, wood
Gift of Nancy and Robert H. Nooter, The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1994.272



Figure 1.6
Unidentified artist
Bowl (*Atubwa*), late 19th-early 20th century
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide,
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986.478.21



Figure 1.7
Unidentified artist
Bowl (*Atubwa*), mid 20th century
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide,
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999.46.113



Figure 1.8
Unidentified artist
Milk Container (*Akarum*), pre-1929
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide,
Milwaukee Public Museum, 36839/9486



Figure 1.9
Unidentified artist
Milk Container (*Akarum*), pre-1968
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide,
National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, E433108



Figure 1.10
Unidentified artist
Fat Container (*Ehuri*), pre-1929
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide, leather
Milwaukee Public Museum, 61612/22548



Figure 1.11
Unidentified artist
Fat Container (*Ehuri*), pre-1947
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide, leather
American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8378 AB



Figure 1.12
Unidentified artist
Fat Container (*Ehuri*), pre-1929
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide, leather
Milwaukee Public Museum, 61613/22548



Figure 1.13
Unidentified artist
Fat Container (*Ehuri*), pre-1947
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide, leather
American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8379 AB



Figure 1.14
Unidentified artist
Fat Container (*Ehuri*), pre-1968
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide, leather
National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution E433084-0



Figure 1.15
Unidentified artist
Fat Container (*Ehuri*), pre-1929
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide, leather
Milwaukee Public Museum, 36582/9486

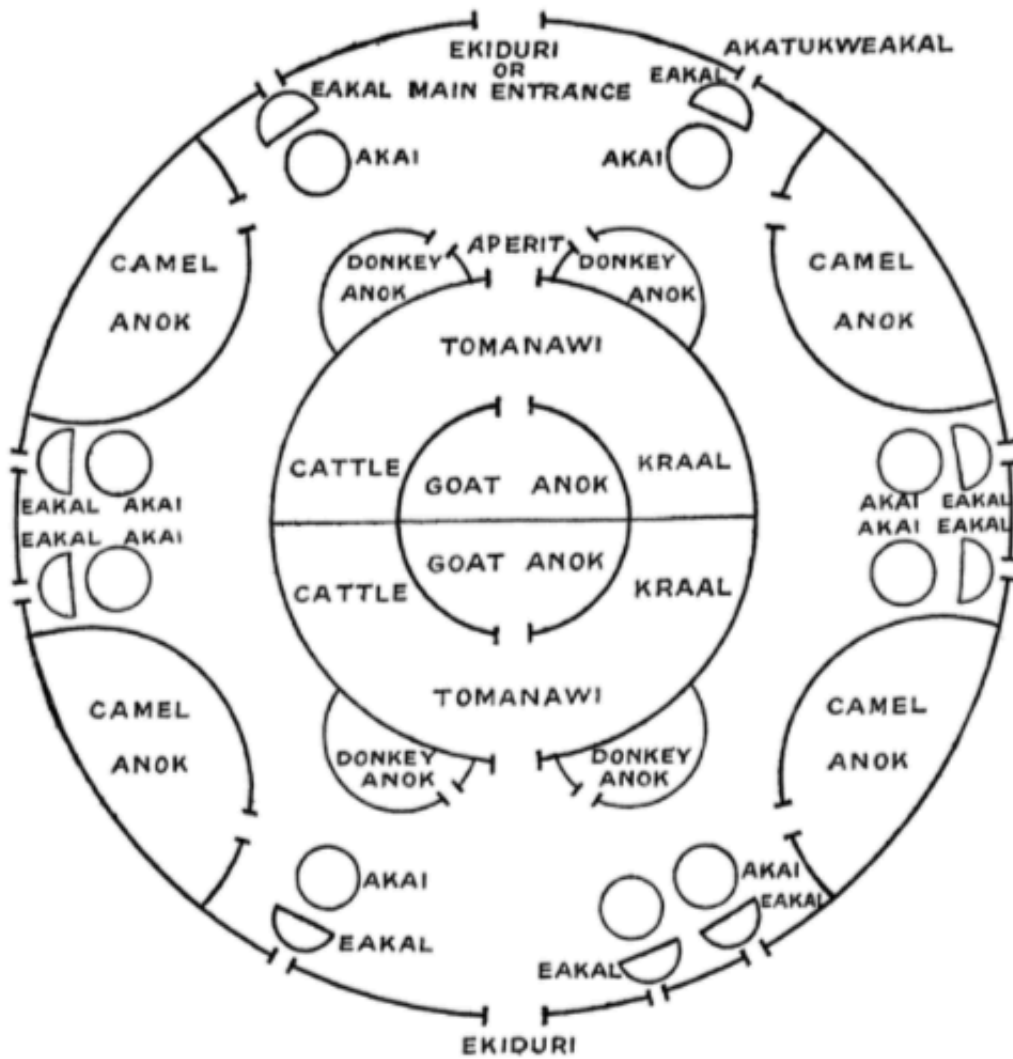


FIG. 1.—PLAN OF A TURKANA VILLAGE OR *Awi*.¹

Figure 1.16

D.E. Emley

Plan of a Turkana Village or Awi

Reproduced in "The Turkana of Kolosia District"



Figure 1.17
Unidentified artist
Fat Container (*Ehuri*), pre-1968
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide, leather
National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution E433086-0



Figure 1.18
Unidentified artist
Fat Container (*Ehuri*), pre-1968
Turkana region, Kenya
Wood, hide, leather
National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution E433103-0



Figure 2.1

Unidentified artist

Shield (*Aupwel*) (Front), 1900s

Turkana region, Kenya

Wood, Hide, Hair, Leather, Plant Fiber

American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8257



Figure 2.2

Unidentified artist

Shield (*Aupwel*) (Front), 1940s

Ferguson's Gulf, Kenya

Wood, Crocodile Hide, Pigment, Hair

American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8255



Figure 2.3

Unidentified artist

Shield (*Aupwel*) (Front), 1940s

Todenyang, Kenya

Wood, Hide, Hair

American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8254



Figure 2.4
Unidentified artist
Fish Trap, 1940s
Todenyang, Kenya
Wood, Plant Fiber, Cord
American Museum of Natural History, 90.1/8411



Figure 2.5

William or Irene Morden

Untitled

Todenyang, Kenya

Photography

Reproduced in William J. Morden and Irene Morden, "The Little Known Turkanas,"
Geographical Magazine: The Royal Geographical Society Magazine 26, no. 1 (1953): 27.

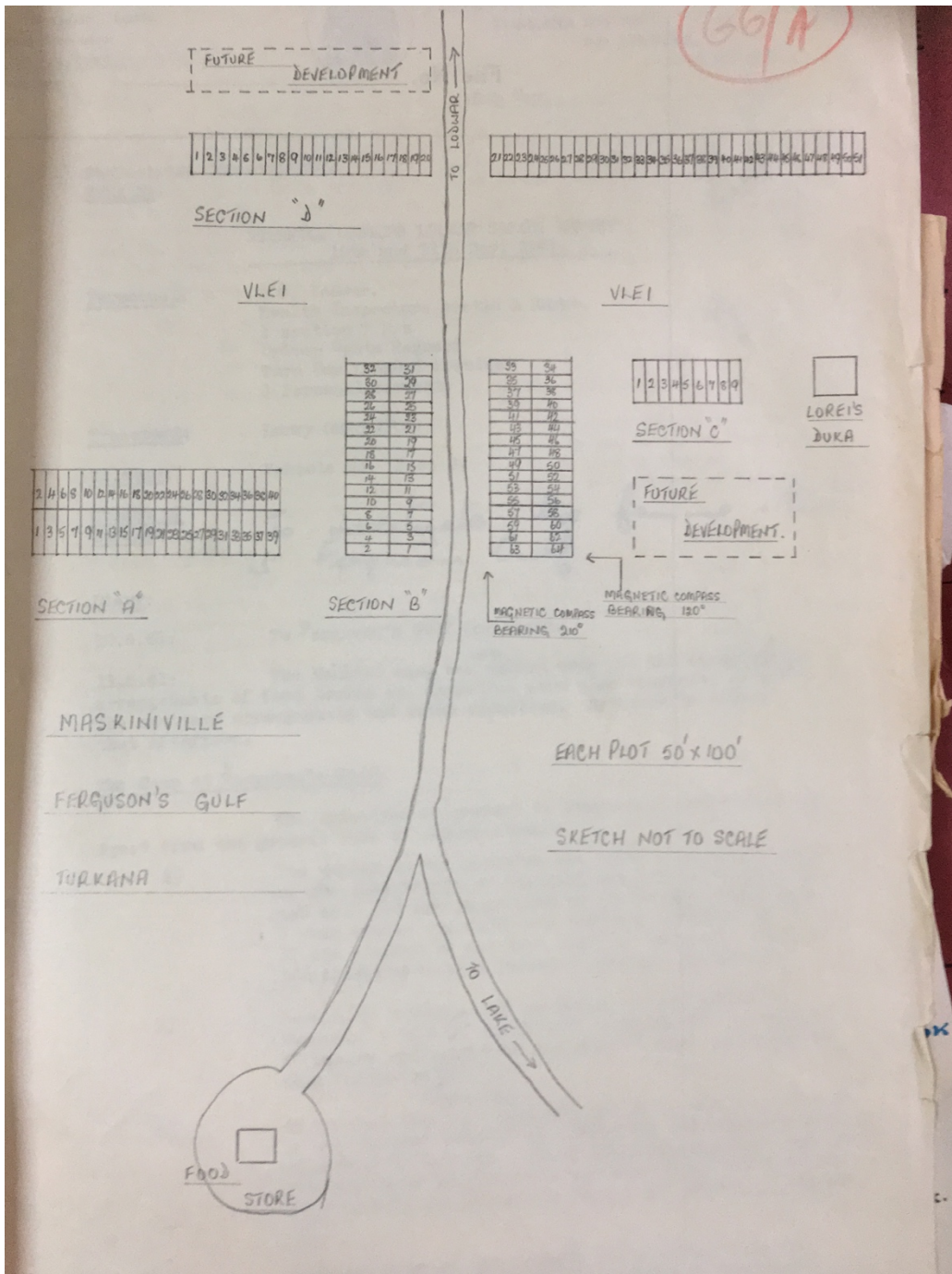


Figure 2.6

Thomas D. Preston, Senior District Assistant, Turkana
 Map of Ferguson's Gulf, 1961
 Pencil on Paper

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/LDW/2/1/60, pp. 66a



Figure 3.1

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana

The Kerio Floors. Chief Kionga's Location, 1932

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2



Figure 3.2

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana

Burning the Bush, 1931

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2



Figure 3.3

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana

Roofing, November 1931, 1931

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

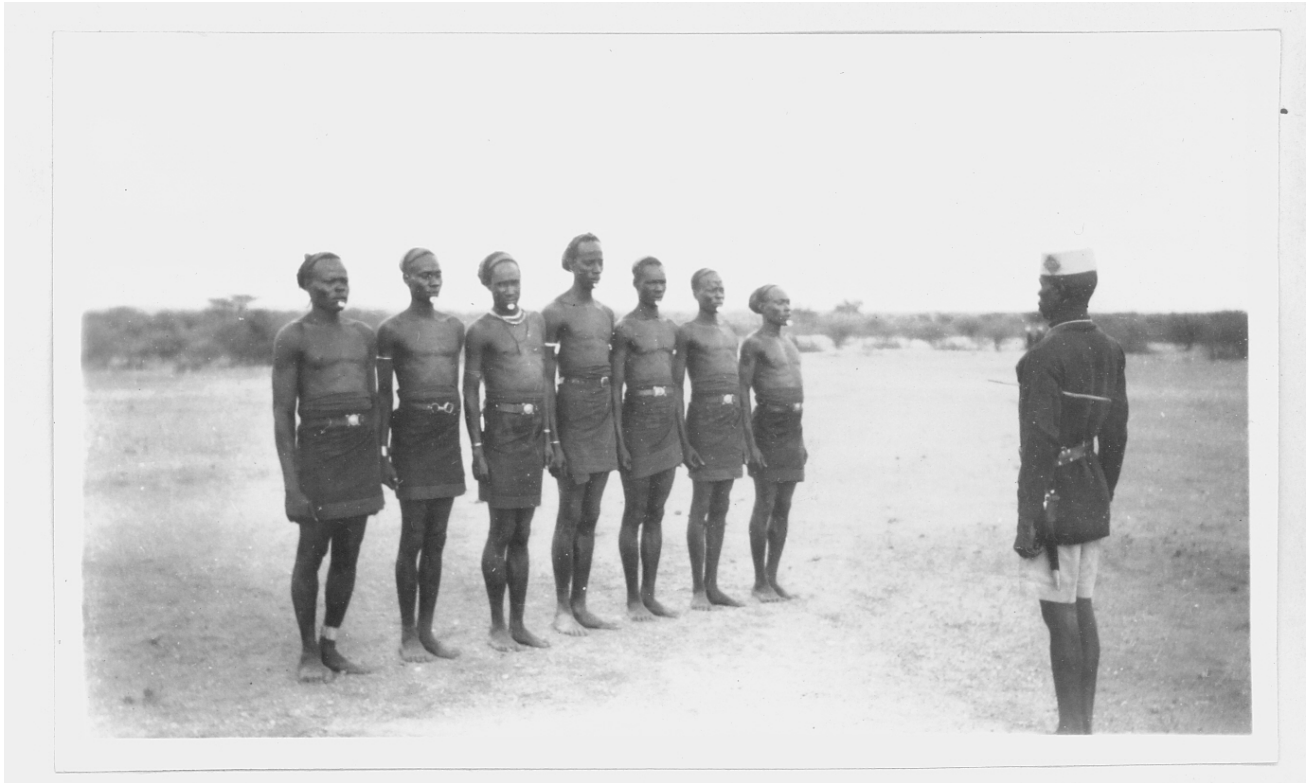


Figure 3.4

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana

A Squad of Tribal Police, 1931

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2



Figure 3.5

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana
Cobwebby Tree at Amiarangan. W. Shore of Lake Rudolf., 1932

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2



Figure 3.6

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana
Dark Tower. An Ancient Ash Crater, And Sand Dunes in the Suguta Valley., 1932
Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2



Figure 3.7

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana

Mapping at Amiarangan., 1932

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2



Figure 3.8

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana
Teleki's Volcano and its Lava Flow, 1932

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2



Figure 3.9

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana
Interior of the circular Cone in the Lake. South Island visible in the extreme left background,
1932

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2



Figure 3.10

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana

The Best Grazing in Chief Abong's Location, 1932

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2



Figure 3.11

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana
Kaputir Water Supply. Sand well in the Turkwel River Bed., 1932

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

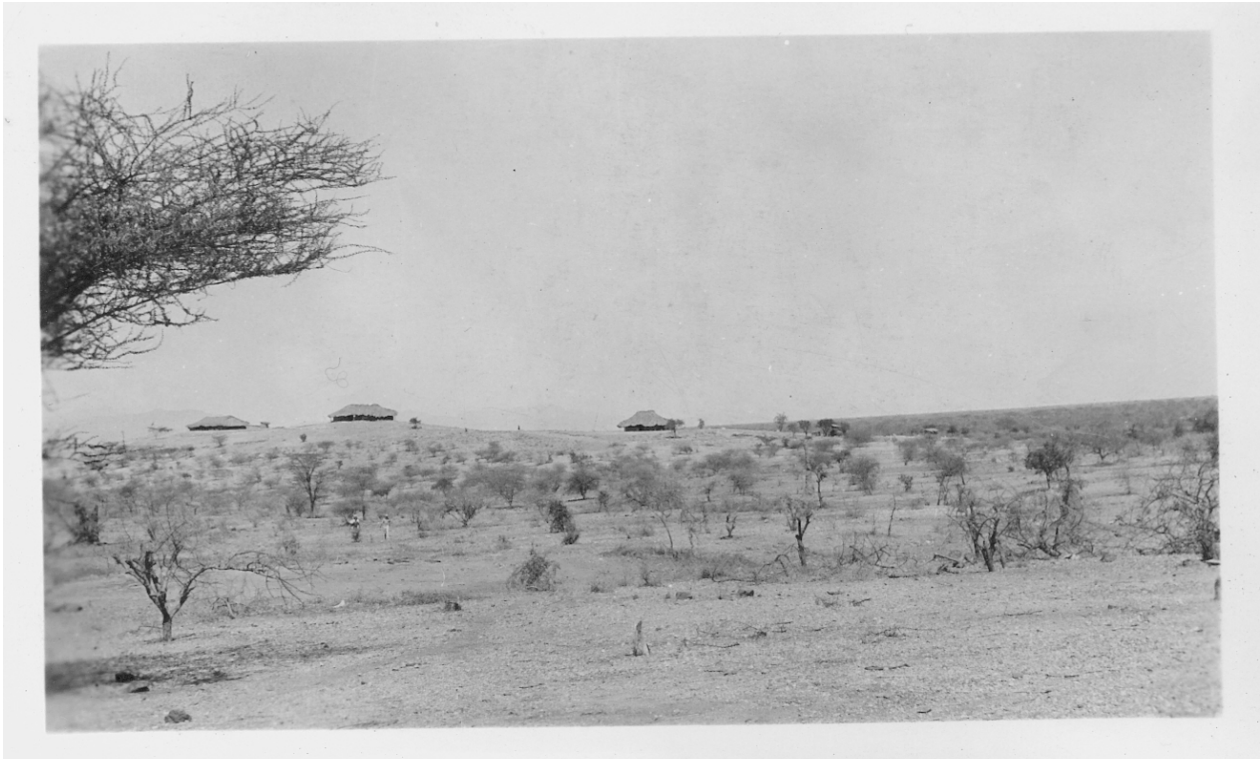


Figure 3.12

Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana
Officer's House in Kaputir as seen from the New Offices., 1932

Photograph

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2



Figure 3.13
Rowland Baker-Beall, District Commissioner, Southern Turkana
6:00pm. Retreat., 1932
Photograph
Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service, DC/TURK/1/2

Bibliography

Abiodun, Rowland. "Understanding Yoruba Art and Aesthetics: The Concept of Ase." *African Arts* 27, no. 3 (1994): 68-78+102-103.

Adamson, Kyalo. "The Transformation of Turkana Traditional Architecture." Unpublished BA Thesis, University of Nairobi, 2015.

Apotsos, Michelle. *Architecture, Islam, and Identity in West Africa: Lessons from Larabanga*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

"Association of Art Museum Curators Announce 2018 Awards for Excellence." *ArtForum*. May 7, 2018, <https://www.artforum.com/news/association-of-art-museum-curators-announce-2018-awards-for-excellence-75314>.

Avery, Sean. *Lake Turkana & the Lower Omo: Hydrological Impacts of Major Dam & Irrigation Development*. Oxford: University of Oxford African Studies Centre, 2012.

Baker, Mike. "Alaska Has Never Reached Ninty Degrees. That Changed This Week." *The New York Times*. July 4, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/04/us/alaska-heat-anchorage-fireworks.html>.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Berns, Marla. *The Essential Gourd: Art and History in Northeastern Nigeria*. Los Angeles: UCLA Museum of Cultural History, 1986.

Best, Günter. *Marakwet & Turkana: Neue Einblicke in die materielle Kultur ostafrikanischer Gesellschaften*. Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Volkerkunde, 1993.

Black, Emily. "The Relationship between Indian Ocean Sea Surface Temperature and East African Rainfall." *Philosophical Transactions: Mathematical, Physical, and Engineering Sciences* 363, no. 1826 (2005): 43-47.

Berman, Bruce. *Control & Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination*. London: James Currey, 1990.

Blier, Suzanne Preston. *The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architectural Expression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Blier, Suzanne Preston. "Words about Words about Icons: Iconology and the Study of African Art." *Art Journal* 47, no. 2 (1988): 75-87

- Blier, Suzanne Preston. "Truth and Seeing: Magic, Custom, and Fetish in Art History." In *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to Social Sciences and the Humanities*, edited by Robert H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O'Barr, 139-166. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Bolster, W. Jeffrey. *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Botkin, Daniel B. *Discordant Harmonies: A New Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Broch-Due, Vigdis. "The Bodies within the Body: Journeys within Turkana Thought and Practice." PhD dissertation, University of Bergen, 1990.
- Broch-Due, Vigdis. "Remembered Cattle, Forgotten People: The Morality of Exchange & the Exclusion of the Turkana Poor." In *The Poor Are Not Us: Poverty & Pastoralism in Eastern Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999.
- Broch-Due, Vigdis. "A Proper Cultivation of Peoples: The Colonial Configuration of Pastoral Tribes and Places in Kenya." In *Producing Nature and Poverty in Africa*, edited by Vigdis Broch-Due and Richard Schroeder, 53-93. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000.
- Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757.
- Cameron, Lynne and Irene Bruna Seu. "Landscapes of Empathy: Spatial Scenarios, Metaphors and Metonymies in Response to Distant Suffering." *Text & Talk* 32, no. 3 (2012): 281-305.
- Cheng, Joyce. "Immanence out of Sight: Formal Rigor and Ritual Function in Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik*." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 55/56 (2009): 87-102.
- Cole, Herbert. "The Vital Arts of Kenya in Northern Kenya." *African Arts* 7, no. 2 (1974): 12-23+82.
- Comaroff, Jean. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff. *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving toward Africa*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishing, 2012.
- Descartes, René. *A Discourse on Method*. Translated by John Veitch. New York: E.P. Dutton,

1916.

Donovan, Alan. "Turkana Functional Art." *African Arts* 21, no. 3 (1988): 44-47.

Dyson-Hudson, Rada and Neville Dyson-Hudson. "Nomadic Pastoralism." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 9 (1980): 15-61.

Dyson-Hudson, Rada and J. Terrence McCabe. *South Turkana Nomadism: Coping with an Unpredictably Varying Environment*. New Haven: Human Relations Area File, Inc., 1985.

Einstein, Carl. "Negro Sculpture," trans. Sebastian Zeidler and Charles W. Haxthausen. *October* 107 (2004); 122-138.

Einstein, Carl. "Totality," trans. Charles W. Haxthausen. *October* 107 (2004): 115-121.

Elkins, Caroline. *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005.

Ellis, James E., M.B. Coughenour and David M. Swift. "Climate Variability, Ecosystem Stability, And the Implications for Range and Livestock Development." In *Range Ecology at Disequilibrium: New Models of Natural Variability and Pastoral Adaptation in African Savannas*, edited by R.H. Behnke, Jr., I. Scoones, and M.V. Brown, 31-41. London: Overseas Development Institute, 1993.

Ellis, James E. and David M. Swift. "Stability of African Pastoral Systems: Alternative Paradigms and Implications for Development." *Journal of Range Management* 41, no. 6 (1988): 450-459.

Emley, D.E. "The Turkana of Kolosia District." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 57 (1927): 157-201.

Fani-Kayode, Rotimi. "Traces of Ecstasy." In *Rotimi Fani-Kayode & Alex Hirst, Photographs*, edited by Mark Sealy and Jean Loup Pivin. London: Éditions Revue Noire and Autograph, 1996.

Fratkin, Elliot. "The Organization of Labor and Production among the Ariaal Rendille, Nomadic Pastoralists of Northern Kenya." PhD dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1987.

Fedders, Anthony and Cynthia Salvadori. *Turkana Pastoral Craftsmen*. Nairobi: Transafrica, 1977.

Gardner, Leigh. *Taxing Colonial Africa: The Political Economy of British Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

- Gatundu, Lydia. "Traditional Art and the Individual: An Ethnographic Investigation of Turkana Kitchen Art." MA Thesis, University of Nairobi, 2010.
- Gray, Sandra, Paul Leslie, and Helen Alinga Akol. "Uncertain Disaster: Environmental Instability, Colonial Policy, and Resilience of East African Pastoral Systems." In *Human Biology of Pastoral Populations*, edited by William R. Leonard and Michael H. Crawford, 99-130. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Gulliver, P.H. *A Preliminary Survey of Turkana: A Report Compiled for the Government of Kenya*. Cape Town: Communications from the School of African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1951.
- Gulliver, P.H. *The Family Herds: A Study of Two Pastoral Tribes, the Jie and the Turkana*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1955.
- Gulliver, P.H. "The Turkana Age Organization." *American Anthropologist* 60, no. 5 (1958): 900-922.
- Higgins, Abigail. "Climate Change Could Devastate Africa: It's Already Hitting This Kenyan Town." *The Washington Post*, January 30, 2016.
- Hodder, Ian. *Symbols in Action: Ethnoarchaeological Studies of Material Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Höhnel, Ludwig von. *Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie: A Narrative of Samuel Teleki's Exploring and Hunting Expedition in Eastern Equatorial Africa in 1887 & 1888*. Volume II. London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1894.
- Hopcraft, Arthur. *Born to Hunger*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968.
- Imperato, Pascal James. *Quest for the Jade Sea: Colonial Competition around an East African Lake*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998.
- Ives, Mike. "A Remote Pacific Island Threatened by Rising Seas." *The New York Times*. July 3, 2016: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/world/asia/climate-change-kiribati.html?rref=collection%2Fspotlightcollection%2Fclimate-casualties&action=click&contentCollection=science®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=collection.
- Kasfir, Sideny Littlefield. *African Art and the Colonial Encounter: Inventing a Global Commodity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.
- Kelsey, Robin. *Archive Style: Photographs and Illustrations for U.S. Surveys, 1850-1890*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

- Kolbert, Elizabeth. *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2014.
- Kolding, Jeppe. "The fish resources of Lake Turkana and their environment." PhD dissertation, University of Bergen, 1989.
- Krauss, Rosalind. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985.
- Kubovy, Michael. *The Psychology of Perspective and Renaissance Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Lamphear, John. "The People of the Grey Bull: The Origin and Expansion of the Turkana." *The Journal of African History* 29, no.1 (1988): 27-39.
- Lamphear, John. *The Scattering Time: Turkana Responses to Colonial Rule*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Lamphear, John. "Aspects of 'Becoming Turkana:' Interactions and Assimilation between Maa- and Ateker-Speakers." In *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, edited by Thomas Spear and Richard Waller, 87-104. London: James Currey, 1993.
- Landau, Paul S. "Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Administration in Africa." In *Images & Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, edited by Paul S. Landau and Deborah Kaspin, 141-171. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Larick, Roy. "Age Grading and Ethnicity in the Style of Loikop (Samburu) Spears." *World Archaeology* 18 (1986): 269-283.
- Larick, Roy. "Warriors and Blacksmiths: Mediating Ethnicity in East African Spears." *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 10 (1991): 299-331.
- Latour, Bruno. *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Latour, Bruno. *Down to Earth: Politics in a New Climactic Regime*, translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.
- Lind, Jeremy. "Adaptation, Conflict, and Cooperation in Pastoralist East Africa: A Case Study from South Turkana, Kenya." *Conflict, Security, and Development* 3, no. 3 (2003): 315-334.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. London: T. Tegg and Sons, 1836.

- Macivar, John Gibson. *On the Beautiful, the Picturesque, and the Sublime*. London: Scott, Webster, and Geary. 1837.
- McCabe, Terrence. "Patterns and Processes of Group Movement in Human Nomadic Populations: A Case Study of the Turkana of Northwestern Kenya." In *On the Move: How and Why Humans Travel in Groups*, editors Sue Boinski and Paul A. Garber, 649-677. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- McCabe, J. Terrence. *Cattle Bring us to Our Enemies: Ecology, Politics, and Raiding in a Disequilibrium System*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.
- Milbourne, Karen E. *Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor in the Arts of Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, 2013.
- Meier, Prita. *Swahili Port Cities: The Architecture of Elsewhere*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016.
- "Melting Arctic ice opens a new route from Europe to east Asia." *The Guardian*. September 28, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/28/melting-arctic-ice-opens-new-route-from-europe-to-east-asia>.
- Meiu, George Paul. *Ethno-Erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging in Kenya*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Miller, Angela L. "Albert Bierstadt, Landscape Aesthetics, and the Meaning of the West in the Civil War Era." *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 27 (2001): 40-59.
- Mirzeler, Mustafa Kemal. *Remembering Nyaече and the Gray Bull Engiro: African Storytellers of the Karamoja Plateau and the Plains of Turkana*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.
- Morden, William J. and Irene Morden. *Our African Adventure*. London: Seeley Service, 1954.
- Nelson, Steven. "Transgressive Transcendence in the Photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode." *Art Journal* 64, no. 1 (2005): 4-19.
- Nelson, Steven. *From Cameroon to Paris: Mousgoum Architecture in & out of Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Nicholson, Sharon. "The Turkana Low-Level Jet: Mean Climatology and its Association with Regional Aridity." *International Journal of Climatology* 36, no. 6 (2016): 2598-2614.
- Novak, Barbara. *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875*. Oxford: Oxford

- University Press, 1980.
- Nyabola, Nanjala. "Kenya's Thirsty Year." *Guernica*. May 7, 2018: <https://www.guernicamag.com/kenyas-thirsty-year/>.
- Pauly, Daniel. "Anecdotes and the Shifting Baseline Syndrome of Fisheries." *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 10 (1995): 430.
- Pido, Donna. "Considering Indigenous Design Paradigms in Education and Practice." Unpublished paper, *Art, Design, Education: Exchange with Africa Symposium* (Helsinki: University of Art and Design, June 14, 2001).
- Plato. *Phaedo*. Translated by Hugh Tredennick. In *Collected Dialogues of Plato*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, 40-98.
- Pratt, D.J., J.R. Blackie, and M.D. Gwynne. *Rangeland Management and Ecology in East Africa*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978.
- Prestholdt, Jeremy. *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Preston, Christopher J. *Grounding Knowledge: Environmental Philosophy, Epistemology, and Place*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.
- Prussin, Labelle. *African Nomadic Architecture: Space, Place, and Gender*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.
- Prussin, Labelle. "When Nomads Settle: Changing Technologies of Building and Transport and the Production of Architectural Form among the Gabra, the Rendilles and the Somalis." In *African Material Culture*, edited by Mary Jo Arnoldi, Christraud M. Geary, and Kris L. Hardin, 73-102. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- Ranger, Terence. "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa." In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 211-262. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Rayne, Harry. "Turkana, Part 1." *Journal of the Royal African Society* 18, no. 71 (1919): 183-189.
- Riegl, Alois. "The Main Characteristics of the Late Roman *Kunstwollen* (1901)," translated by Christopher S. Wood, 87-104. In *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*. New York: Zone Books, 2000.
- Rigby, Peter. *Persistent Pastoralists: Nomadic Societies in Transition*. London: Zed Books, 1985.

- Roberts, Mary Nooter, ed. *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals*. New York: Museum for African Art, 1993.
- Roberts, Mary Nooter. "The Inner Eye: Vision and Transcendence in African Arts." *African Arts* 50, no. 1 (2017): 60-79.
- Rohde, Klaus. *Nonequilibrium Ecology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Sangupta, Samni. "Heat, Hunger, and War Force Africans Onto a Road of Fire." *The New York Times*. December 15, 2016:
https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/15/world/africa/agadez-climate-change.html?rref=collection%2Fspotlightcollection%2Fclimate-casualties&action=click&contentCollection=science®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=collection
- Sayre, Scott. "There Will Always be Fires." *Harper's Magazine* August (2018): 32-40.
- Scranton, Roy. *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization*. San Francisco: City Light Books, 2015.
- Sobania, Neal. "Feasts, Famines, and Friends: Nineteenth Century Exchange and Ethnicity in the Eastern Lake Turkana Region." In *Herders, Warriors, and Traders: Pastoralism in Africa*, edited by John G. Galaty and Paul Bonte, 118-142. Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.
- Spencer, Paul. *Nomads in Alliance: Symbiosis and Growth among the Rendille and Samburu of Kenya*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Spencer, Paul. *The Pastoral Continuum: The Marginalization of Tradition in East Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Spirn, Anne Whiston. "One with Nature: Landscape, Language, Empathy, and Imagination." In *Landscape Theory*, edited by James Elkins and Rachel Ziady DeLue, 43-68. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Stoddart, L.A., A.D. Smith, and T.W. Box. *Range Management*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975.
- Tervalá, Kevin. "BOOK REVIEW: Shangaa: Art of Tanzania." *African Arts* 49, no. 2 (2016): 91-92.
- Tervalá, Kevin. "The Radical Cosmopolitanism of Barthélemy Toguo." *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 44, no.1 (2019): 120-131.
- Trawalter, Sophie, Kelly M. Hoffman, and Adam Waytz, "Racial Bias in the Perception of Others' Pain," *PLOSOne* 7, no. 11 (2012): e4586.

- Trewartha, Glenn. *The Earth's Problem Climates*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.
- "University Examination Results, 1925." *The Review of English Studies* 1, no. 4 (Oct. 1925): 506-512.
- Wolchover, Natalie. "A World Without Clouds." *Quanta Magazine*, February (2019): <https://www.quantamagazine.org/cloud-loss-could-add-8-degrees-to-global-warming-20190225/#>.
- Wood, Christopher S. "Introduction." In *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, edited by Christopher S. Wood, 9-72. New York: Zone Books, 2000.
- Van Allen, Judith. "Sitting on a Man: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 6, no. 2 (1972): 165-181.
- Verswijver, Gustaaf. "Removable Hair Caps of the Karamoja (Uganda)." *African Arts* 43, no. 4 (2010): 60-71.
- Vogel, Susan, editor. *ART/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*. New York: Center for African Art, 1988.
- Vogel, Susan. *Baule: African Art/Western Eyes*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- van Zwanenberg, R.M.A. *Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya, 1919-1939*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1975.
- Zeidler, Sebastian. "Totality against a Subject: Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik*." *October* 107 (2004): 14-46.