

Transformations in local environmental conservation practices in Tanzania: the case of *Ngitili* in Bariadi district, 1800s – 2000.

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This study addresses, from a social-environmental history perspective, transformations in the local environmental conservation practices in Tanzania. The focus is on *ngitili*, the Sukuma environmental management practice in Bariadi District from the 1800s to 2000. Based on information obtained from interviews conducted with highly ethical considerations and based on archival and oral, analysed within the framework of post modernism paradigm, which departs from modern scientific mindset that does not consider indigenous practices in development plans, the dissertation traces transformations in indigenous environmental practices in Tanzania. The main submission of the study is that in the past indigenous environmental conservation practices were anchored on specific cultural and religious principles. Some traditional belief systems and cultural practices played a decisive role in shaping the interaction between humankind and nature in pre-colonial times. Adherence to certain environmental taboos and beliefs in the spirituality of certain landscape features effectively contributed to the protection of such features from human misuse. Yet, the effectiveness of these beliefs changed significantly over time. The study found that traditional beliefs and systems did not die because of colonialism. Instead they were transformed in the new colonial context, and often continued serving as forces for environmental conservation. After independence, the central government in Tanzania devised various development programmes aimed at conserving environments. The programmes led to further transformations of the local environmental conservation ideas and practices. To ensure that the ‘new’ environmental management programmes were successful, the government took into consideration the customary institutions that promoted the preservation of environmental resources. Therefore, although the programmes which were drawn up in the early post-colonial period were doomed to failure due to their insensitivity to indigenous environmental consciousness, from the 1980s onwards, environmental projects combined traditional practices and scientific principles.