Remote Sensing and Maasai Ethnoarchaeology in Engaruka, Tanzania

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Finnish archaeologists have studied the past of Engaruka area in the North Tanzanian Rift Valley since the mid-1990s (Fig. 1). In addition to the prehistoric studies, ethnoarchaeological observations have been made among the modern pastoralist Maasai inhabitants e.g. of their settlement patterns and land-use based on field studies and remote sensing data. Locals were interviewed on field about various aspects of their daily life, socio-cultural contacts, and livelihoods. The locations of a number of abandoned and inhabited settlement sites, their architectural features, and various environmental attributes were recorded, and the field observations were supplemented with remote sensing data, especially with high resolution QuickBird satellite imagery (Fig. 2). In the future the initial findings will be extended to cover the wider surroundings of Engaruka in the Rift Valley and to provide bases for more wide ranging land-use studies among the pastoralist Maasai. Also the temporal changes in the environment will be studied, as evidenced by the remote sensing data and field observations. Besides revealing new aspects of the land-use and settlement use of the Maasai, carried out research can have significance also for development co-operation, e.g. connected to the pastoralist land-use planning.

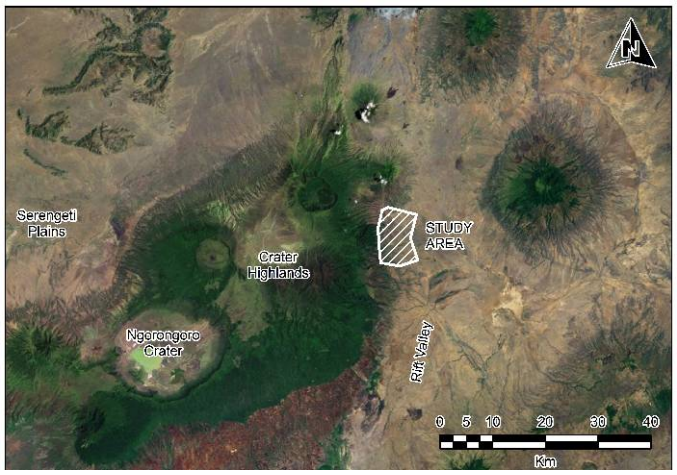

Fig. 1. Location of the study area (O. Seitsonen 2010).

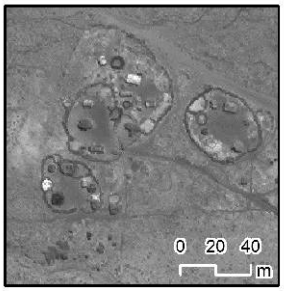

Fig. 2. An example of a traditional Maasai homestead as shown in the Quickbird satellite imagery (courtesy of O. Seitsonen & V. Laulumaa 2002).