This is a repository copy of *Making the 'man-eater': Tiger conservation as necropolitics*.

**Article:**

2      TITLE: Making the 'man-eater': tiger conservation as necropolitics

4      ABSTRACT: In this article I analyze the practice and politics of classifying a tiger as a 'man-
eater' in South India to explore what doing so reveals more broadly about the relations

6      between animal life and the kinds of human life marked as expendable by the state. I draw on
Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics in order to analyze how the Indian State attempts

8      to manage human-wildlife relations in a contested plantation landscape of high priority for
wildlife conservation. While there is a large literature theorizing wildlife and biodiversity

10     conservation as the practice of biopolitics, I argue conservation, as both a typology of space
and set of ideologically malleable practices, remains under-theorized as a form of

12     necropolitics, the politics mediating death. I examine how the Indian State goes about
reclassifying tigers from a strictly protected endangered species to killable—the process of

14     making the 'man-eater'—in relation to how the state both values and devalues human and
non-human life as a process rooted in colonial histories of accumulation by dispossession.

16     This article responds to calls across political ecology and political geography to better
theorize the role of non-human animals as essential subjects of inquiry in political

18     contestations. It does so through exploring the spatial contours of deadly encounter between
plantation workers and tigers in the plantation-conservation necropolis.

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Keywords: necropolitics; tigers; India; wildlife conservation; less-than-human geographies;

22     political animal geography

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26

1. INTRODUCTION

28

One afternoon in Gudalur, a small town in Tamil Nadu, India near the borders of Kerala and

30   Karnataka, I received a text message and photograph from a former Tamil Nadu Forest

Department staff member. In the photograph, there was a man. He was splayed at an angle,

32   his head turned sideways. But where his torso ought to have been there was nothing, just

blood-stained grass.[1] The accompanying message said, "Found this morning. Man-Eater."

34   The man was a tea plantation worker from Jharkhand, one of the poorest states in India.[2] The

tiger that was thought to have done the killing was shot dead eight days later, and two police

36   officers would be sent to the hospital with their own wounds from bullets they caught in

crossfire. It was never conclusively proven the police killed the right tiger, however.

38

The moment of deadly encounter between species is a prism through which questions of

40   significant debate for advancing political animal geography as a field of research become

focused (Hobson, 2007; Srinivasan, 2016). In this article, I chart the politics and procedures

42   through which a tiger is made killable by the Indian State to advance thinking relationally

about how the state values the lives of certain humans against those of certain animals, and

44   the racialised violence embedded in these calculations in a landscape with the world's single

largest population of wild tigers (Jhala et al., 2015). My aim is take seriously the bidirectional

46   nature and flows of power embedded in the hyphen connecting human with animal in

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[1] I later learned this photograph was taken *after* the man's body parts were found scattered throughout the area and brought back together.

[2] Poverty here is in reference to several gross economic indicators, including the Reserve Bank of India and Census of India statistics on the percentage of population below the poverty line, as well as household asset indicators (2011-2012).

'human-animal relations'. When the life of a single tiger is held in the balance, what is

48    signified in the politics determining which lives (human and animal) are secured and which

are sacrificed at the hands of sovereign power? This leads me to ask: what can the

50    procedures, practices, and politics surrounding the killing of a tiger and attempts to classify it

as a 'man-eater'[3] reveal about the relationships between animal life and the kinds of human

52    life marked as expendable by the state? I approach this question through examining the

making of the 'man-eater' in relation to Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics (Mbembe,

54    2003). Necropolitics contributes to understanding the deathly side of what is a more

theoretically advanced understanding of biodiversity and wildlife conservation as biopolitics,

56    and does so with vitally important attention to the racializing practices found at the heart of

the capitalist colonial project (Biermann & Mansfield, 2014; Fletcher, 2010; Mbembe, 2003).

58

Necropolitics advances grappling with the position of animals as political subjects enmeshed

60    in more-than-human contestations by directly engaging with the geographies of "who must

die" when species meet (Collard, 2012; Mbembe, 2003: 11; Philo 2017). Animal geography

62    has a longstanding commitment to questions of non-human politics—most persistently

through engaging with forms of animal ethics and the politics of animal commodification

64    (Collard, 2014; Emel & Wolch, 1998; McKnight, Wolch, & Emel, 1998; Shukin, 2009;

Wolch & Emel, 1995). There is a robust literature on the killability of animals, especially as

66    pertains to domestic livestock, slaughterhouses, and zoos (Animal Studies Group 2006;

Chrulew, 2011; Chrulew, 2017; Cudworth, 2015; Gillespie, 2018; Shukin, 2009; Wadiwel

68    2002; 2015). Especially pertinent to this article, Chris Wilbert (2006) offers a valuable

contribution for thinking about man-eaters in relation to their colonial imaginary as

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[3] The term 'man-eater' is employed here because it is the most common descriptor for a carnivore that eats humans (male, female, or otherwise) within the context of the study region. This term is not meant to suggest that only men are subject to tiger or leopard attacks.

70    monstrous beings with agential capacities. But as Buller (2014) reviews, more recent

attention in animal geography has focused on animal geographies' ontological politics,

72    revealing "interspecies contact or symbiogenesis based upon a more convivial, less fixedly

human and more risky approach to boundaries, to political actors, and to political outcomes

74    that inherently challenges what it means to 'belong' or to pertain'" (314). This shift towards

animal ontological politics and 'convivial' human-animal relations has raised criticisms by

76    scholars, especially drawing on critical race theory, feminist studies, and postcolonial studies,

concerned with the ways the 'ontological turn' overlooks the very *human* politics of

78    difference underpinning human-animal relations and the histories of whom or what 'counts'

as human or animal (Emel 1995; Jackson, 2013; 2015; Kim 2015; 2017; Olson, 2017;

80    Sundberg, 2014). I am therefore concerned quite simply about what happens when human-

animal encounter isn't convivial, but deadly, where the geographic conditions that prefigure

82    the moment of encounter crystalize difference enacted through race, caste, and class in

producing *less-than-human geographies* (Laurie & Shaw, 2018; Philo, 2017). Less-than-

84    human geographies signal a turn towards giving more attention to 'direct' acts of violent,

visceral harm and the geopolitical environments that foreground them, rather than, as is more

86    common in human geography to date, forms of structural, slow violence produced through

social inequalities in the 'letting die' of surplus populations (Philo 2017; Tyner 2013, 2015).

88    While the killability of tigers is essential to my discussion of making the man-eater and will

be discussed later in the article, my primary concern here lies with the death of humans

90    resulting from these more-than-human entanglements.


92    In bringing animals to the center of this discussion of violent more-than-human politics, the

interdisciplinary field of political ecology, being broadly concerned with issues of justice in

94    the co-production of environments and access to natural resources, has increasingly come to

engage with more-than-human geography and post-humanist theory on the one hand, and the

96    politics of animals on the other (Collard 2014; Robbins 2011; Margulies and Bersaglio, 2018;

Sundberg, 2014; Turner 2015). The theoretical and methodological tools and practices of

98    political ecology are familiar to political geography, with both fields offering unique vantage

points from which to analyze and examine politics of the environment at different scales of

100   inquiry (Benjaminsen et al., 2017; Bigger and Neimark, 2017; Dalby, 2000; Emel, Huber, &

Makene, 2011; Robbins, 2003, 2008; Turner 2015; Whitehead, 2008). Critical analyses of

102   this kind demand research operating not only 'from below' or 'from above', but with critical

attention to politics as the expression of discontent where power (from above) and resistance

104   (from below) meet in space. I therefore situate my engagement with necropolitics through

post-humanist political ecology as a research practice for interrogating the relations between

106   animals and the elements of the Indian State as a political animal geography of wildlife

conservation. My aim here is to grapple with the subject of the animal and the subject of the

108   state apparatuses operating literally on the ground in Gudalur, as well as from a distance, in

co-producing the problem of the man-eater as it encountered its human prey in a deeply

110   politicized post-colonial landscape.

112   In what follows, I describe and advance my argument for understanding the incident of the

man-eater in Gudalur as an act of necropolitics, followed by an overview of the political

114   economy of this landscape to situate my analysis within the appropriate colonial and

postcolonial historical context of Gudalur's land tenure politics. I then move to a discussion

116   of the rules and bureaucratic procedures of making a man-eater in India in order to bring

forward how the practices and procedures of classifying a tiger as a man-eater can be

118   understood as the bureaucratization of violent politics within the necropolitical space of the

plantation. I end with a discussion of what this incident demonstrates in stitching together the

120    life of a single tiger with how the state legal, repressive, and bureaucratic apparatuses attempt

to manage the process of making the man-eater. This discussion clarifies how the underlying

122    political economy of the postcolonial plantation landscape is central both to the death of the

tiger's victim but also the tiger itself.

124

126    2. CONSERVATION NECROPOLITCS

128    The work of Michel Foucault has been heavily influential in political ecology for illuminating

how the modern state reproduces the conditions for compliance over subjects through

130    capillary forms of discursive power, what Foucault described as governmentality, the

'conduct of conduct' (Fletcher, 2010; Foucault 1991: 48; Legg, 2005; Rutherford, 2007).

132    Studies of contestation and conflict in and through the environment drawing on the logics of

governmentality are more numerous than those drawing on Foucault's related work on

134    biopolitics, how the state wields power over the population (as opposed to the individual) by

'making live' and 'letting die' (as opposed to sovereign power asserted as 'take life or let

136    live') (Foucault 1991; 2003: 239-264; 2007). Foucault's concerns here were with the

everyday making of sovereign subjects and the increasingly intimate ways beginning in the

138    mid-18th Century in Europe through which sovereign powers sought to "penetrate society,

exact compliance, and invoke commitment" (Sivaramakrishnan 1999:5). Biopolitics is

140    therefore about the production and maintenance of the state's population, and how in order to

do so, the state at the level of the population asserts "individualizing and totalizing form[s] of

142    power" (Foucault, 2000: 332; Jessop 1990: 236).

144    Biopolitical theory has more recently informed the development of a better understanding of

regulating non-human life in the context of biodiversity conservation (Biermann &

146    Mansfield, 2014; Srinivasan 2014; Fredriksen 2016). Extending biopolitics into spaces of

nature conservation has in turn expanded the purview of whom or what be might considered

148    as biopolitical subjects (Biermann & Mansfield, 2014; Lorimer & Driessen, 2013; Srinivasan,

2014). Recent interventions have focused explicitly on 'more-than-human' biopolitics

150    (Cavanagh, 2014), drawing Foucault into close readings with animal and more-than-human

geographies to consider the regulation of animal life at the level of the singular animal, the

152    population, and entire ecosystems (Biermann, 2016; Hodgetts, 2017). But how do we

consider the more-than-human entanglements of lives whose encounter is often a mortal one?

154    Here biopolitics falls short of helping theorize how and why regimes of governmentality

maintain the geographical conditions for encounter between human and non-human

156    populations that are not mutually supportive or reliant, but ambivalent or antagonistic

(Cavanagh 2014; Ginn, 2014; Hodgetts 2017). For this reason I am interested in the under-

158    theorized role of the active making of death that occurs alongside biopolitics as distinct from

the processes of 'letting die.'

160

Necropolitics speaks to the inadequacies of biopolitics to address the violent and racialised

162    forms of difference produced in colonial and postcolonial geographies (Mbembe 2003;

2005). While biopolitics focuses on the *bios*—life—how the sovereign subject must be

164    conserved for the state to go on, these practices of 'making live' are always in dialectical

relation with death, but also what is made killable—or in the words of Mbembe, the

166    "contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death (necropolitics)" (2005: 39).

This is not to say death does not figure in biopolitics, or that death has been ignored in critical

168    studies of human-animal relations (Emel & Neo, 2010; Gillespie & Collard, 2015; Lopez &

Gillespie, 2015; Shukin, 2009). Rather, the concept of necropolitics addresses the

170    inadequacies of biopolitics' engagement with the *active political* processes of death as

necessary for the maintenance of other kinds of life under particular political regimes.

172

I am drawn to necropolitics for its geographic nature in understanding the power of killability

174    (cf Singh and Dave 2015) in relation to economic spaces of productivity, and how this helps

advance a more nuanced understanding of the work of death in studies of political ecology,

176    what Cavanagh and Himmelfarb (2015) have called *necropolitical ecology*. Cavanagh and

Himmelfarb (2015) highlight the inadequacies of strictly Foucaultian accountings of

178    biopolitics that under-theorize issues of race, caste, and class within colonial and post-

colonial contexts (Legg 2007). As they describe, "Foucault (2003:254–255) is at pains to

180    illuminate the ways in which 'racism'—understood as a logic that separates the normative

elements of a population from 'the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal)'—

182    constitutes the primary means of inducing a caesura 'between what must live and what must

die'" (Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 58). Mbembe therefore does much needed work in

184    making biopolitics 'travel' to the postcolony, both in a geographical sense, but also in

advancing theory more attuned to the dehumanizing practices and technologies at the heart of

186    the colonial processes of territiorialization, economic plundering, and production of the

colonial subject. When Mbembe writes that in the context of the colony, the colonized were

188    relegated "into a third zone between subjecthood and objecthood", he also is speaking to their

spatial relegation from the *bios*, the population made to live through the context of the slave

190    plantation (2003: 24). Mbembe describes how the plantation developed as a spatialized zone

of exception for lives cast as less than human within the colonial state. Necropolitics shows

192    how politics can be understood as "the work of death" (16)— not just the making of the *bios*-

subject and its securitization—but in enabling a certain population to thrive, whom the state

194     targets, through what processes, under what conditions, and the spatial conditions necessary

for acceptable extermination by sovereign power.

196

In bringing necropolitics to considerations of political animal geography, it is important to

198     acknowledge the historical postcolonial terrain this argument advances on. Much like

Agamben's concept of bare life (1998), Mbembe developed the theory of necropolitics to

200     respond to what he saw as the new and disturbing ways in which colonial states developed

zones of exception enabling horrific atrocities and acts of violence. Bare life, as described by

202     Agamben, is the expression of humans removed from the privileged sphere of politics and the

state, or *bios*, reduced to the *zoe*, "the simple fact of living common to all living beings

204     (animals, men, or gods)" (Agamben, 1998:1). Being reduced to bare life strips humans of

value, rendering humans as animal bodies, killable without a crime being committed, an act

206     of violence occurring beyond the law. As Laura Hudson (2011) explains, "Because

humanness is made a political, conceptual category rather than a biological fact, certain

208     humans can be defined as no longer fully human or deserving of 'human rights'" (1664).

Mbembe infuses Agamben's theory of bare life with an acute analysis of the particular ways

210     in which slavery, capitalism, and colonialism work to actively animalize humans through

geographies of death (Hudson, 2011).

212

I take up necropolitics in order to infuse an analysis of making the man-eater with the

214     political economy of land tenure contestations born out of violent colonial and post-colonial

histories. I do this in order to show what kinds of *human life* are deemed acceptable to

216     exposure to death through their relation to animal life. In this way, this isn't a story about the

killability of tigers *per se*, but tigers as state subjects bestowed with certain rights and

218     protections in relation to other human subjects with differentiating access to inclusion or

exclusion from what McIntyre and Nash (2011) have called the *biopolis* or *necropolis.* These

220    are the spaces in which sovereign powers work to reproduce life on the one hand and spaces

of "negation or socially dead" on the other (2011: 1467). Like biopolitics and necropolitics,

222    their existences are entwined, both necessary to ensure their mutual reproduction (McIntyre

and Nash, 2011).[4] Necropolitics and by extension the necropolis, which expands on the

224    spatial characteristics of necopolitics Mbembe set out, becomes a way to name and

historicize deathly encounter in the spaces of surplus populations' excess. In this light,

226    necropolitics is a means for theorizing the position of non-human animals as state subjects

but whose own vulnerability and exposure to death are entangled in reproducing *less-than-*

228    *human* geographies. Less-than-human geographies signals "what diminishes the human…not

what renders it lively, but what cuts away at that life, to the point of, including and maybe

230    beyond death" (Philo: 2017: 258). This is different from examining the kinds geopolitical

violence of unjust social conditions enabling the death of 'surplus populations' through

232    structural violence (Tyner 2013, 2015). Instead, a shift towards what activates certain

geographies as 'less-than-human' is a turn towards examining acts of visceral, 'direct'

234    violence head on, in order to make sense of the geopolitical conditions that foreground these

acts.

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[4] A point on language- for there appears to be confusion in the literature over the different meanings between necropolitics and thanatopolitics- and in fact the terms are often used interchangeably in the geographical literature (Tyner 2015). I invoke necropolitics as I understand Mbembe did, in the context of how sovereign powers control the capacity to kill as a response to surplus population, and the geographical contours of space that enable this. This is different, for instance, than how Stuart Murray employs thanatopolitics to understand mobilising death as a political act of resistance against biopower— in his example, how suicide bombers engage death as politics (Murray 2006). My reading then is of thanatopolitics as a form of resistance to biopolitics through death, rather than necropolitics, which I read as another form of disciplining power over a sovereign population (Mbembe 2005).

It is necessary here to differentiate between negative interactions between species which

238    emerge in landscapes humans and large animals co-inhabit, and those that are expressly

necropolitical in nature. Doing so also helps to set a broader agenda for engaging with

240    conservation as necropolitics. There is a large literature on human-wildlife interactions in

India and what is commonly referred to in the conservation literature as 'human-wildlife

242    conflict'—a framework broadly understood as characterizing instances of negative

interactions between species in which wildlife damage, destroy, injure, or kill people,

244    people's livestock, or other personal property people care for or rely on (Madden 2004;

Peterson et al. 2010; Redpath 2015). There is nothing expressly necropolitical about negative

246    interactions between humans and wildlife when taken at face value, such as crop raiding by

elephants or livestock predation by tigers or leopards. There are instances in which these

248    kinds of negative interactions might be characterized through the lens of structural violence

(Tyner 2013; 2015), as persistent social inequalities can produce the conditions in which

250    certain communities are more vulnerable to the impacts of negative encounters with wildlife

than others (Ogra 2008*;* Massé 2016; Margulies and Karanth 2018; Rai et al., 2018). But here

252    an important distinction must be drawn between incidents of negative interaction between

humans and wildlife and accounts like that of the man-eating tiger in Gudalur as an

254    expression of conservation necropolitics. Without diminishing the significant material,

bodily, and emotional impacts that incidents of human-wildlife conflict can produce (Jadhav

256    and Barua 2012; Barua et al. 2013), to be understood as necropolitical acts I argue there

should be evidence of calculation in (re)producing deathly spaces, where certain people are

258    more systematically assured of exposure to greater risk of bodily harm and death compared to

populations the state actively attempts to secure and maintain.

260

11

In the empirical case of the Gudalur man-eater, this distinction will be made clear through a

262 historical accounting of plantation workers in relation to the plantation necropolis, a spatial

zone of exception that confirms the status of laborers as expendable lives when calculated

264 against the state's biopolitical efforts to secure, maintain, and increase the state's population

of tigers and other wildlife within the same landscape. As I will show, the tea plantation

266 geography in Gudalur situated alongside a protected area landscape with one of the highest

densities of elephants and tigers in the world reproduces conditions through which

268 particularly marginalized workers are ensured of heightened risk of encounter with dangerous

animals, both through their geographic proximity to the conservation biopolis as well as

270 temporally, with worker movement in and out of the plantation landscape occurring at

periods of time in which animal presence is also frequent. Framing these encounters as

272 instances of 'human-wildlife conflict' serves to de-politicize the social and geographical

conditions of necropolitical encounter by instead focusing on individual incidents of animal

274 attack as unfortunate but ultimately 'natural' events.


276 3. METHOD


278 This work draws on 10 months of research conducted in 2015-2016 while living in the town

of Gudalur in the Nilgiris District in western Tamil Nadu State. Gudalur is also the name of

280 the taluk, or minor administrative district, where the tiger was killed on the Wood Briar

Estate near the village of Devarshola near the border of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve. During

282 this time I interviewed over 100 Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu Forest Department staff

working in this geographic region across three protected areas, in addition to conducting

284 interviews with conservation and *adivasi* rights activists and NGO staff, wildlife biologists,

and local political groups. This represents an active choice in 'studying up' (Nader, 1972,

286    2011), to more explicitly take notice of the individuals embedded within institutions of power

often poised as monolithic actors in and of themselves. I make this choice to focus my

288    research efforts within institutions of state power explicit here in order to clarify which

voices are presented as more active and present than others in my analysis. This research is

290    further informed by close readings of secondary materials including historical gazetteers and

colonial-era travel writings, policy briefings and reports of state-level forest departments,

292    central government materials of the Indian Forest Service, the National Tiger Conservation

Authority (NTCA), as well newspaper reports surrounding the events of man-eating tigers in

294    the Gudalur region in 2015 and 2016.


296    In what follows I chart the history of Gudalur as a postcolonial landscape. I do this to

contextualize the production of spaces in which certain people are actively made more

298    vulnerable in exposure to deathly encounters with animals than others.[5] This sets the terms

for a reading of the Gudalur tea plantation landscape as a conservation necropolis.

300

4. PRODUCING THE PLANTATION

302

*4.1 Landscapes of Exception*

304

Concerted efforts to 'open up' the Gudalur region for colonial extractivist activities began at

306    the turn of the 19th Century. The British did not attempt to disrupt the traditional feudal

landholding system of the *janmis*, nobility who held absolute and hereditary claim by birth to

308    lands which they leased to tenant farmers and later British planters, after the fall of the

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[5] For a close reading of the biopolitical stakes of vulnerability and exposure in contemporary issues of global environmental change, see Cavanagh, 2014.

Pychee Raja in Wayanad in 1805.[6] Instead, as Menon et al. (2013: 453) explain, "areas under

310   the control of *janmis* could be better characterised as zones of accommodation, zones in

which the British chose to recognise local *janmis* as a conduit through which to eventually

312   raise revenue." Under British colonial rule, land was largely classified as productive

agricultural land, reserved forest [e.g. for timber management], or 'wastelands'— a category

314   comprising of 'unimproved' lands suitable for cultivation or economically 'unproductive'

forests (Gidwani, 2008; Gidwani & Reddy, 2011). Today, these 'wastelands' would be

316   characterized as tropical evergreen, moist deciduous, and semi-deciduous forests and

grasslands (Prabhakar, 1994; Prabhakar and Gadgil, 1998). In order to 'improve' these lands

318   beginning in the late 19th Century, the principal aim of forest management was the increased

production of teak and other hardwoods. Areas without valuable hardwoods (or after their

320   wholesale extraction) were transformed into coffee, rubber, cinchona, and tea plantations,

with tea eventually becoming the predominant cash crop in the region for both large

322   plantation holders and smaller scale farmers (Thurston, 1913: 17, 113; Prahbakar, 1994;

Menon et al., 2013).

324

The production of the plantation landscape in the Gudalur region is a history of accumulation

326   by dispossession (Harvey, 1996; Mcintyre and Nast, 2011), which foregrounds the region's

eventual position as a site of intense land tenure conflict (Raman, 2010).[7] These lands were

328   already inhabited by a variety of different peoples prior to colonization, including a large

number of what are now referred to as *adivasi* communities, indigenous or first peoples

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[6] Pychee Raja led an armed resistance against the British occupation after the fall of the Mysore Kingdom following the killing of Tipu Sultan by British armed forces in 1799.

[7] Ravi Raman (2012) provides the most comprehensive and insightful investigation of tea plantation labor and how it is historically situated within the world economy.

330    (notably the Kattunaikan and Kurumba tribes, but also Paniya). [8] Unsurprisingly, it was many

of the 'wastelands' described above that were the lands being worked and lived in by many

332    *adivasi* communities (Burton, 1900; Thurston, 1909). Following the armed resistance of the

Pychee Raja against the British occupiers, *adivasi* communities were forcibly evicted from

334    their lands, or forced into bonded or indentured labor on commodity and agricultural

plantations (Menon et al., 2013; Raj, 2013; Raman, 2010; Thurston, 1909; 1913: 17).[9]

336    Through a series of legislative acts including the Forest Acts of 1865, 1878, and later 1927,

the British Crown vested all 'wastelands' [forest] and uncultivated lands to the Crown (Hedge

338    and Enters, 2000; Krishnan, 2009). These were important acts for ensuring that 'wastelands'

became productive as economic 'forests' (e.g. timber plantations). With the passage of India's

340    Forest (Conservation) Act (1981) and then Wildlife Protection Act (1972), many of these

forests, often adjacent to tea plantation landscapes, were converted into protected areas for

342    conservation, including what is now Mudumalai National Park in Tamil Nadu (Hegde &

Enters, 2000; Krishnan, 2009).

344

Today Gudalur taluk comprises 12 revenue villages (~749 km$^2$), and slightly less than half of

346    this land is classified as *janmam* lands, as opposed to government *ryotwari* revenue lands

(Krishnan, 2009). The tea plantation landscape of this region had three primary waves of

348    expansion in the Nilgiris, with three concomitant influxes of workers. The first influx of labor

occurred in the late 19th Century with the initial expansion of tea, which occurred with the

350    conversion of coffee plantations into tea after a series of devastating coffee blights. Tea

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[8] *Adivasi* translates as "first people" or "original inhabitant" in Hindi, and refers to the "Scheduled Tribes" of India as designated in the government census.
[9] In the Janmi period these landscapes were already sites of *adivasi* exploitation, in which *adivasis* in particular were kept as bonded labourers or outright slaves (*adscripti globae*), whose tenure to the land were transferred to colonial lessees.

picking is a daily activity, and the switch from coffee to tea resulted in a shortage of laborers

352     to work in the more intensive production and harvesting of tea compared to coffee (Raman,

2010; Raj, 2013). The second influx came during the Grow More Food campaign beginning

354     in the 1940s and 1950s, with the third and largest influx of plantation workers arriving

following the 1964 Indo-Ceylon Agreement (Menon et al., 2013). At this time Tamil

356     repatriates were brought to the region from Sri Lanka to work on the newly formed

government-owned Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation Corporation (TANTEA) developed for the

358     purposes of Tamil repatriate resettlement (Menon et al., 2013). These plantations were largely

carved out of State Reserve Forest. In time, additional Tamil repatriates came to also work on

360     privately held *janmam* plantations. As the number of migrant workers on tea estates came to

settle in the Gudalur region, *adivasi* dispossession of land continued. The proletarianization

362     of *adivasi*s in the 20th Century continued through rampant land alienation with influxes of

settlers from the Kerala coast, again during the Grow More Food campaign (Steur, 2011).

364     During this time many *adivasi*s came to work as agricultural wage labourers either for settlers

(primarily from Kerala), or in some cases as plantation labourers (Raman, 2010; Raj, 2013).

366     Table 1 is a summary of Gudalur's tea estates, including the government-owned TANTEA

estates, holdings of publicly-traded corporate holdings (Hindustan Unilever), as well as

368     smaller, private estates. Given illegal expansion of tea cultivation in the region on plantation

lands, which will be discussed further below, the actual area under tea cultivation is likely

370     much greater than the percentages presented in Table 1.


372     *4.2 'Progressive' politics and landscapes of ambiguity*


374     The middle of the 20th Century saw a series of progressive labor and land reform acts passed

in Kerala and Tamil Nadu with the intention of improving labor conditions for plantation

376     workers and to settle land rights in the region through the abolishment of the *janmam* system.

The Tamil Nadu Gudalur Janmam Estates (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Act of

378     1969 (henceforth *Janmam* Act) was intended as a progressive act of legislation to secure

*patta* or land titles for tenants on *janmam* lands with expired leases. In its original intent, the

380     government agreed to compensate the *janmis* and turn title of land over to legitimate tenants.

With the exception of two estates that purchased *janmi* rights prior to the 1969 Act, all other

382     tea estates in the Gudalur region came under what the Act identified as 'Section-17' lands.

According to the Act, estate tenants would obtain title for cultivated lands on their estates,

384     while the State Revenue and Forest Departments would take control over uncultivated lands.

The aim of the act was therefore to transfer ownership of lands under productive cultivation

386     by estates to the estate owners themselves, while transferring all other land ownership back to

the state (Krishnan, 2009). With the exception of one estate, the majority of land within

388     estates fell under the categories of 'uncultivated' or 'forested' lands,[10] which would mean that

estates would lose significant land holdings should the Act be implemented (Krishnan, 2009).

390     All *janmam* leases in Gudalur have since expired, but despite 50 years since the passage of

the *Janmam* Act the matter of its implementation has been held up in India's higher courts

392     (including the Supreme Court), as estate owners and present-day *janmis* have filed writ

petitions questioning the various statutes of the Act and its legality. In lieu of the Act's

394     implementation, what has ensued instead is a half-century of litigation and contestation in the

courts over who holds legal claim over formerly leased *janmam* lands.

396

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[10] A significant parallel debate to the contestation over the *Janmam* Act relates to the very definition of forest in India, which again traces its history back to Gudalur, when the Nilambur Kovilangam, TN Godavarman, filed a case in the Supreme Court after witnessing the rampant deforestation taking place in Gudalur as a result of land 'encroachment' when he drove through the Gudalur area in the 1990s. See Menon et al., 2013 for a detailed discussion of the implications of the Godavarman Judgement for defining forest in Gudalur and its relations to the *Janmam* (1969) Act.

Within this legal ambiguity, tea plantation landscapes have flourished as zones of exception.

398 As Krishnan (2009) explains, in the most comprehensive study of the *Janmam* Act to date,

"With a legally tenuous status, leased landscapes have also emerged as realms of ambivalent

400 control. Both the state and planters were unable to, or abstained from, exercising power in

any conclusive manner given the legal ambiguity" (Krishnan, 2009: 291). In practice, this

402 ambiguity has led to tea estates expanding cultivation in order to reduce the amount of land

they might lose should the Act be implemented (Krishnan, 2009). More dramatically,

404 Section-17 lands have been occupied by migrant and tenant farmers, many of whom are

workers on plantation estates employed as casual, temporary workers so that estates are not

406 required to provide the services, benefits, and protections full-time plantation labourers are

provided by law under the Plantation Labour Act of 1951 (Besky, 2008). Estates have also

408 been accused by the government of encouraging workers and tenant farmers to occupy

uncultivated tracts of estates to plant with tea and other commodity crops (especially during

410 booms in tea, black pepper and ginger markets), thus ensuring that additional lands could not

be surveyed as 'forest' under the Section-17 stipulations.

412

What has resulted in the Gudalur region, particularly in O'Valley and Devarshola (where the

414 man-eating incident in 2016 occurred), is a dramatic decline in forest cover over the past

several decades and a concomitant increase in the expansion of the built environment in line

416 with the region's growing population of unsettled occupants, who now wish to claim land

title under the *Janmam* Act as the lands' legitimate tenants (often through securing false

418 titles). As of a 2002 government survey, over 50 percent of undeveloped 'forest' land on

estates had disappeared since the 1969 Act was notified and surveyed in 1974, with a

420 corresponding increase in developed areas of plantations from 19,700 acres to 25,757 acres,

with another 10,928 acres in additional cultivation by occupying famers (cited from

422     Krishnan, 2009: 291). In the process, villages and dispersed settlements have sprung up as

        sizeable towns without formal land rights.

424

        These issues remain contested despite Supreme Court orders for the Forest and Revenue

426     Departments to implement the *Janmam* Act. The state government faces the dilemma of what

        to do about 'encroacher' occupants on Section-17 land that is supposed to be vested back to

428     the state, as it was previously surveyed as 'forest', but is now under cultivation or even

        developed as settlements. The most recent orders from the Court, given in a judgement in

430     March 2018, also dictates that estates should compensate the Tamil Nadu government for

        destruction of forest since the 1969 Act was first notified and lands were surveyed. But whom

432     should be considered rightful landowners, given the dramatic increase in population since the

        *Janmam* Act was notified, especially in the context of the histories of this landscape as

434     originally appropriated from *adivasi* communities during pre-colonial and colonial periods,

        remains a matter of heated debate.

436

        The production of tea estates as landscapes of exception in Gudalur shapes them as sites of

438     vulnerability and exposure for workers, including exposure to animal encounter. Located at

        approximately 11°30' N, Gudalur's average sunrise and sunset times range between roughly

440     6-6:30 AM and 6-6:30 PM, respectively, depending on the season. In accordance with the

        Plantation Labour Act, estate owners are legally permitted to require laborers to work

442     anytime between 6 AM and 7 PM. Dangerous encounters with wild animals by humans in

        South Indian plantation landscapes tend to occur in the early morning or evening, when

444     human visibility is lower and laborers are either headed to or from the fields for work

        (Kumar, Mudappa, & Raman, 2010). As the Mudumalai Tiger Conservation Plan indicates

446     based on camera trap data, these are the times when both leopards and tigers are most

actively hunting (Singh, 2014: 76). While the Plantation Labour Act was meant to ensure the

448  well-being and safety of plantation workers, guaranteeing them housing, health care, rations

and schooling for children (Besky, 2008: 2), many tea plantations on *janmam* lands remain

450  vulnerable spaces for laborers because plantation labor laws are inconsistently followed or

applied. While the progressive land and labor acts of the mid-20th Century appear well-

452  intentioned in improving worker safety and settling *janmam* lands with formal land titles, in

Gudalur, they have had led to the scenario of solidifying these landscapes as precarious

454  spaces for some of India's most marginalized peoples who work on lands they do not own.

As 'necropolitans' residing and working within the plantation landscape, laborers are

456  predisposed to the hazards of confinement within a spatio-temporal environment of

heightened exposure to interspecies encounter along the boundaries of a high-priority tiger

458  conservation area (McIntyre and Nast, 2011). Plantation laborers are poorly paid, often

housed in abysmal and precarious housing, and unprotected by inconsistently enforced labor

460  laws that employers contest. The laboring population is predominately composed of Sri

Lankan Tamil repatriates, *adivasis,* Dalits ('untouchables'), and lower-caste migrants from

462  other parts of India. Echoing McIntyre (2011: 19): "Race becomes a marker not just of

irregularly offered employment, but a marker that one deserves the misery to which one is

464  consigned."


466  But it is not just animal temporalities that predispose plantation laborers to heightened risk of

dangerous animal encounter. Just alongside this plantation landscape is one of the most

468  important wildlife conservation complexes in South India, made up a series of national parks,

wildlife sanctuaries, and reserve forest. As half of a "dialectical spatial unity" conjoined to

470  the biopolis (McIntyre and Nast 2011: 1472), the tea plantation landscape serves as a space of

economic productivity, but does so alongside this space of non-human biopolitical

472    reproduction and securitization. In what follows, I describe how the plantation necropolis is

sutured to the conservation biopolis through the animals that weave through them, on the one

474    hand disrupting the administrative and bureaucratic practices of spatial purification,

territorialization, and separation at the heart of postcolonial statecraft, but on the other

476    reinforcing the interwoven relations between race, class, and efforts to conserve and protect

animals (Kim 2015; 2017).

478

5. PROCEDURES OF KILLING

480

Found at the tri-border junction of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka are a set of protected

482    areas, two of which are notified as Tiger Reserves (Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu,

Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka), the strictest notification of conservation space in

484    India. Tiger Reserves, unlike National Parks or wildlife sanctuaries without this additional

notification, not only fall under the jurisdiction of individual states and the Central

486    Government Indian Forest Service, but must also develop approved management plans in

accordance with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). The NTCA oversees all

488    tiger conservation programs in India. In 2013 the NTCA developed a "Standard Operating

Procedure to deal with emergency arising due to straying of tigers in human dominated

490    landscapes" (No.15-37/2012-NTCA, 2013). The document contains lengthy procedures and

protocols for "for dealing with incidents of tiger straying in human dominated landscapes"

492    (2). The purpose is "to ensure that straying tigers are handled in the most appropriate manner

to avoid casualty / injury to human beings, tiger, cattle and property" (2). What follows is an

494    itemized 22 bullet-point standard operating procedure (SOP) for how to handle a stray tiger

(or leopard—the SOP is inconsistent in discussing only tigers or tigers and leopards) in a

496    human-dominated landscape.

The 22 action steps of the SOP include the constitution of a committee for "technical

498  guidance and monitoring" of the strayed cat, establishing "identity of the tiger by comparing

camera trap photographs with India's national camera trap repository," and carrying out

500  "detailed research" in order "to assess the reasons for the frequent tiger emergencies in the

area." Several of the guidance steps refer to issues of maintaining law and order: "In all

502  instances of wild carnivores like tiger / leopard straying into a human dominated landscape,

the district authorities need to ensure law and order by imposing section 144 of the Criminal

504  Procedure Code." This act dates to the British Raj and was first used to disrupt and quell

protests during the Indian Independence movement; it prohibits any assembly of five or more

506  people in an area where it has been imposed and cannot exceed two months. The maximum

punishment is three years imprisonment for failing to comply.


508  What follows are a series of protocols on how to tranquillize a tiger, in the event trapping the

animal is unsuccessful. It is to be determined by the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW) of the

510  state whether or not the animal should be relocated to the wild or placed permanently in a

zoo. Next are more guidelines on reducing the possibility of causing panic or a mob,

512  including establishing a forest department media liaison and more noteworthy, "in case

monitoring using camera traps (Phase-IV) is on-going in the area, the minimum tiger

514  numbers based on individual tiger captures, should not be given undue publicity without due

cross checking with the National Tiger Conservation Authority" (5). This is to minimize the

516  possibility of over-extrapolating about the number of tigers in an area without a firm grasp of

their real population size (as camera traps may capture images of the same tiger many times).

518  But as interviews revealed, this is also to reduce public anxieties about the number of tigers

that might have already inhabited the landscape but were simply hitherto undetected.

520    It is in Annex II that the protocols for the "Declaration of Big Cats as 'Man-Eaters'" are

described (Annexure II: 17). The first bullet point of the annex begins: "Both tiger as well as

522    leopard are known to cause habituated loss of human life (man-eaters). Such confirmed

'man-eaters' should be eliminated as per the statutory provisions provided in section 11 of the

524    Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972." It then reiterates the parallel statutes of the WPA that the

CWW has the sole authority to declare a tiger or leopard a man-eater, and that he or she must

526    also do so in writing and explain the reasons for the declaration. Various protocols are then

put forth with how to handle a man-eater, including the assembly of a committee, camera

528    trapping, and positive identification of the animal prior to any consideration of declaring a

man-eater. An important point reiterated several times in the protocols is how essential it is

530    for it to be clear that the animal is indeed a 'habituated' man-eater and not an animal that has

killed a person or persons due to 'chance encounter':

532        As most of our forests outside protected areas are right burdened, the probability of chance

encounters is very high…The declaration of an aberrant tiger / leopard as a man-eater

534        requires considerable examination based on field evidences. At times, the human beings

killed due to chance of encounters may also be eaten by the animal (especially an

536        encumbered tigress in low prey base area). However, such happenings are not sufficient for

classifying a tiger / leopard as a 'man-eater', which can best be established *only after*

538        *confirming the habituation of the aberrant animal for deliberate stalking of human beings,*

*while avoiding its natural prey*. (Annexure II: 18, my emphasis).

540    What follows are the protocols necessary for going about killing the animal as an absolute

last-resort, including the requirement for a written statement from the CWW explaining the

542    justification for declaring the animal as a man-eater and the appropriate bore size of weapons

which should be used for its destruction.

544    I outline the complex bureaucratic procedures the Indian Forest Department is mandated to

follow in order to consider how bureaucratic visions of space, nature, and landscape also

546    figure into our understanding of the production of man-eaters and related enactments of

deathly spaces. In turning to necropolitics and the necropolis in the context of postcolonial

548    tea landscapes as zones of exception (and in moments of human-animal encounter, zones of

exceptional death), I wish to draw out how the quotidian bureaucratic processes that exist on

550    paper must be understood as occurring within ambiguous spaces through which state power is

unevenly exerted.

552    6. THE MAN-EATER THAT WASN'T

A week after the incident of the Gudalur man-eater I met with a high-ranking Forest

554    Department officer from Tamil Nadu who worked to capture the tiger. In addition to the

incident itself, we also discussed the question of responsibility, and the complex relationships

556    forged between deadly animals, marginalized communities, and the state apparatuses tasked

with conserving species. Shot through these conversations were the contours of state

558    territoriality, conservation as biopolitics (Biermann and Mansfield, 2014), and the friction

produced when animals transgress administrative boundaries intended to signify the limits of

560    their geographic acceptability. Speaking of another man-eater from the previous year and the

Tamil Nadu Forest Department's attempts to quietly push the tiger West across the Kerala

562    border, the officer said:

        I know it isn't ideal, but once an animal crosses that border, it really isn't our issue

564        anymore…Of course that isn't how these things really should be dealt with, but we

        have jurisdictions animals don't understand. If a tiger kills a man in Kerala and then

566        kills a woman in Tamil Nadu, whose tiger is it? These animals are smarter than

        anything, we can't just keep them in one place…We are putting borders up they do not

568     respect. They do not see Kerala, or Karnataka, or Tamil Nadu. They see forest, and they

        have just as much right to exist here as we do.

570     And yet, the ways in which the Indian Forest Service and state Forest Departments attempts

        to govern wild animals in India would suggest the contrary, that they very much *do* believe

572     animals understand administrative boundaries. There are deep contradictions between how

        the state attempts to govern animal populations as biopolitical subjects through spatial

574     separation and enclosure, and how individual state actors understand individual animals to

        navigate space, as evidenced above.

576

        Tigers are territorial animals, and in territorializing space, individual tigers, especially males,

578     compete with one another in contests over their respective domains. An increasing population

        of tigers will therefore require an increasing amount of space in which to live, and a prey

580     base to support their sustained reproduction (Wikramanayake et al.,1998). Debates about the

        total population size and density of tigers in India and within the region are a matter of

582     intense, even at times vitriolic debate between wildlife ecologists and tiger biologists

        (Gopalaswamy et al., 2015; Harihar et al., 2017; Karanth, 2011; Qureshi et al., 2018). In the

584     context of Mudumalai National Park and the broader Mudumalai-Bandipur-Wayanad-

        Nargahole landscape, tiger numbers have been steadily rising for at least the past decade

586     (Table 2). As of the 2014 India Tiger Census, this landscape was determined to have 570

        tigers—more than any other single landscape in the world (Jhala et al., 2015: 14). As of 2014,

588     Mudumalai National Park was assessed to have 74 tigers, or a tiger density of 20.4/100 km$^2$,

        "at par with the some of the best Tiger Reserves in India and far exceeds those in rest (sic) of

590     Asia" (Singh, 2014: 236-237; Figure 1). According to Mudumalai's current Tiger

        Conservation Plan, this density matches the park's estimated carrying capacity, or even

592     exceeds it, based on prey density calculations (Singh, 2014: 134). So while the Mudumalai

Tiger Conservation Plan acknowledges that the "carrying capacity of tiger in the core [the

594   extent of the National Park] is saturated," there is no indication in the management plan that

efforts in the future will shift to maintaining a population of this size. On the contrary, the

596   plan suggests means by which non-native species might be removed from the former timber

plantation turned protected area to continue supporting a growing tiger population without

598   limits (2014: 135). To that end, the second of three primary management goals for the park is

"increasing the range and abundance of tigers, co-predators and prey *outside* Mudumalai

600   Tiger Reserve by enhancing source-sink connectivity and development of dispersal

corridors" (Singh, 2014: 124, my emphasis). And yet the management plan, inclusive of

602   Mudumalai's buffer zone management plan, is opaque regarding where exactly these tigers

might live or roam, or what the consequences of this growing population will mean for long-

604   term wildlife management beyond the park's borders.


606   The Tiger Conservation Plan for Mudumalai articulates the perspective that tigers "prefer

undisturbed areas of the reserve that connects adjoining contiguous habitat" and that they are

608   "intolerant" of the disturbed habitat outside of the reserve (Singh, 2014: 70). And yet at the

same time, the plan makes no mention of an idealized tiger population for the region—the

610   implication of the plan's objectives is that more tigers signifies a better tiger reserve and

better tiger conservation management outcomes. Written into the plan is the inherent

612   contradiction of state practices of conservation territorialization: the political spatial

enclosure of animals seeking to preserve 'inviolate space' for 'wildlife' and 'wild animals'

614   without taking into account their movement, impermanence, and dynamism (Ingold, 2005).

This is not to suggest that tiger populations should not be enabled to live and reproduce as

616   biopolitical subjects as a consequence of capital-intensive commodity agriculture dominating

once-forested landscapes where tigers previously roamed in greater numbers. Rather, I argue

618    that the state has chosen to deliberately intervene into the lifeworlds of tigers and goes to

       great lengths to assure their flourishing. The state's conservation apparatuses must therefore

620    acknowledge their responsibilities to citizens who live in close relation to the conservation

       biopolis, drawn into the plantation necropolis through a history of colonial dispossession. In

622    reading across the long history of whose lives are secured and those whose are not in

       conserving tigers, these mortal interspecies calculations are imprinted with the racialized

624    logics of Gudalur's colonial history that reduce certain human lives to an impoverished

       existence in the maintenance of the plantation—codified through the necropolitics of tiger

626    conservation.

628     Govindrajan (2015: 34) notes in her own accounting of a man-eating leopard in Central India

       that "human-wildlife conflict is shaped by the unruly nature of human and nonhuman animals

630    inhabiting geographies that overlap and intersect and are themselves unruly." But to ignore

       the explicitly political context underpinning encounters between big cats and other large

632    mammals with certain kinds of people in telling the story of the Gudalur man-eater would be

       to pay insufficient attention to the role of the state in mediating these encounters and the

634    inherent contradictions that exist between state bureaucratic conservation practices and the

       biogeographies of the animals they seek to govern as biopolitical subjects. Increasing

636    incidents of human-wildlife conflict and public attention to them, both by political parties and

       the media, had reached a fever pitch by the time I was conducting fieldwork in and around

638    Gudalur in 2016. Over the course of just a few months, widespread strikes were held in

       Gudalur District in protest of what various political parties felt was the ineptitude of the

640    Forest Department to deal with mounting incidents of violent interactions between people

       and wild animals. It was an election year in Tamil Nadu and *the* primary topic of political

642    parties on both the right and left were regarding 'human-wildlife conflict.' During the riots

that broke out just a year prior following the deaths of two individuals, an *adivasi* man in the

644     neighbouring district of Wayanad in Kerala and a female tea plantation worker in Gudalur,

forest department officers and conservation NGO employees were beaten up in a riot, and a

646     Forest Department jeep was burned (Figure 2; Margulies, 2018).

So when the latest killing of the man from Jharkhand occurred in Gudalur, not only local, but

648     state level bureaucrats understood the slow pace of the bureaucratic machinery's paper-

shuffling would be unable to stop an all-out riot. What happened in Gudalur was something

650     quite exceptional when compared to other accountings of man-eating cats in India that

remained on the prowl for months at a time in India in the past, slowly adding names to their

652     human body count (Mathur, 2016). Almost immediately following the man's death, the Field

Director of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, in coordination with the Gudalur District Forest

654     Officer, set up an encampment in the tea estate where the tiger was believed to be hiding. For

over a week the tea plantation became a veritable battlefield with 150 law enforcement agents

656     including a Special Tiger Protection Force with tiger sniffing dogs from neighboring

Karnataka and the Tamil Nadu Reserve Police Force poised against one common enemy- an

658     old and injured, increasingly hungry tiger.

While the Gudalur tiger was eventually killed, it never actually became a man-eater, at least

660     not in the formal sense as described in the prior section. The committee required by the

662     NTCA provisions for declaring a man-eater was formed, but it never formally declared the

tiger a man-eater because of insufficient evidence it was a 'habituated' killer. Unless the tiger

664     continued to eat people, the committee argued they were unable to declare him a man-eater;

and yet, given the charged political atmosphere, nor did they feel they could afford to wait for

666     the tiger to kill again. As the NGO representative of the committee reported publicly to the

media: "The tiger did in fact eat the human prey. As per the law, if a tiger eats only one

668 human prey, it cannot be declared a man-eater. But at the same time we cannot wait for

another kill in order to confirm it as a man-eater because people's lives are at stake."

670 Conveyed in this statement is the friction at work in competing modalities of state

bureaucratic time (Mathur, 2016). The committee had to wait to declare the tiger a man-eater,

672 but they 'could not wait' in this instance because people's lives were at stake and in this

instance, the media, the public, and politicians were watching. And yet to wait is precisely

674 what they were legally compelled to do. The pace of these state apparatuses moving at

different speeds against each other produced an entropic release of force— a tiger shot from

676 all angles in 'self-defense' by police, who in so doing also shot themselves. Like the tiger the

year before, the tiger both had to be and could never be a man-eater.

678

For the elements of the state bureaucracy on the ground, there was no easy choice. To declare

680 it a man-eater they would have to wait for more people to die, and in so doing, face the threat

of public uprising that had been mounting for years in response to the uneven political

682 geographies of vulnerability and insecurity produced through uncertain land tenure claims.

On the other, they could hastily declare the tiger a man-eater but later face admonishment by

684 the National Tiger Conservation Authority for failing to follow the mandated protocols, as

well as perhaps the international NGOs who offer training, technical assistance, and funding

686 to the Forest Department, and even larger agencies like the World Bank who have invested

significant funding in tiger conservation for over a decade (i.e. The Global Tiger Initiative).

688 These institutions expect to see their financial investments awarded with increasing tiger

populations, not increasing tiger deaths.

690

*6.1 On the deadly encounter*

692

In the context of human-wildlife encounter in Gudalur, the 'contact zones' of encounter

694    between humans and animals are enmeshed in contestations over the constitution and

separation of conservation biopolitical space in relation to the necropolitical space of the

696    plantation (Haraway 2008: 216; Mcintyre & Nast, 2011). Encounter value helps theorize the

commodification of when and where species meet—for instance, how chance encounter with

698    charismatic wildlife generates capital through spectacular accumulation (Barua 2016b; 2017;

Brockington, Duffy, & Igoe, 2008; Igoe, 2010; Igoe, Neves, & Brockington, 2010). As Barua

700    writes, "An encounter poses problems; it reconfigures identities, space, political economies"

(Barua, 2016, p. 265). But what of encounters that humans wish to avoid, in which encounter

702    isn't convivial or ambivalent (Ginn, 2014), but where encounter spells death? It is within this

context that the literature in animal and more-than-human geography tends to fall short of the

704    normative political commitments to justice that (at least some) political ecology asserts as

essential (Mann, 2009; Loftus, 2017). There are easy slippages that disable animal

706    geographic theory from advancing critically across a terrain of justice and for whom, enacted

across various kinds of difference, when animals as individuals are divorced from how the

708    state ascribes value and protections onto them at the level of the population. On the one hand,

literature on animals as 'lively commodities' advances a better understanding of the role of

710    animals as sentient subjects in the circulation of capital through conservation landscapes, but

is generally less attentive to the everyday encounters through which particular wild animals

712    are engaged in acts of destruction and violence (Collard, 2012; Collard & Dempsey, 2013;

Barua, 2016b; 2017). The case of the Gudalur man-eater reveals a less-than-human

714    geography of exposure, where the biopolitics of governing conservation space as a zone of

accumulation through wildlife reinforces the necropolitics ruling the plantation as a zone of

716    exception, in which marginalized and racialized classes and castes of people are maintained

within spaces of unrelenting precarity in the name of profit maximization.

718

But what of the animal in the case of the man-eating tiger; how does closer attention to the

720    tiger itself, not as a species but as an individual, inform a more incisive political analysis?

Shot through the bureaucratic considerations of the tiger's killability as outlined above, there

722    is also the time and space of the tiger. Mathur (2014: 151), in describing how a man-eating

leopard came to terrorize a small town for months in a remote region of Himalayan India

724    describes how understanding the time of the leopard was central to understanding the terror it

instilled in the local community. Similarly, the Gudalur tiger created the conditions for chaos

726    through its own form of time, but it was equally the tiger's *biogeographic* collision with

Gudalur's political economic history that created the man-eater that wasn't a man-eater.

728    Despite widespread understanding, even by Forest Department staff, that tigers do not merely

'stray out' of protected areas, they also live in and amidst peopled landscapes, it was the

730    tiger's act of 'transgressing' this invisible line of demarcation between 'the wild' and 'the

human' that set the procedures for its death in motion. It is believed the tiger had been injured

732    in a territorial fight with a more dominant male tiger. In losing this territorial battle, the tiger

may have left Mudumalai and entered into the tea plantation landscape in search of easier

734    prey. Or perhaps the tiger had been living within the tea estate for some time. The history of

the tiger's geography, in this instance, remains uncertain.

736

The eventual killing of the tiger represented the collision of uncertain land tenure rights and

738    illegal development against the constitution of animal space and the space of the plantation,

producing the conditions in which contestations between landless labourers, land occupants,

740    the forest department, India's higher courts, and tea plantation owners converged. It is

therefore impossible to treat the incident of the man-eater of Gudalur as a simplistic issue of

742    human-wildlife conflict—but rather, the man-eater highlights how misleading the framing of

'human-wildlife conflict' as a static set of relations appears when viewed through the lens of

744    history. As one local conservation NGO advocate complained of the handling of the man-eater, "It would be of great help to both humans and wildlife, if the government expedites the

746    process of removing encroachments from [the] ecologically sensitive Nilgiri biosphere reserve, at the same speed with which they eliminated a male tiger in Gudalur." This quote

748    points to the entangled relations of the tiger with the now decades pending court cases over whom has land tenure rights in the contested forests, villages, and plantations landscapes of

750    Gudalur. As Laurie and Shaw (2018: 16) compel: "We must challenge those autopsies that return "natural" causes of deaths. Social murder hangs across the truncated lives of

752    capitalism. And we are complicit." In this light, framing the incident of the Gudalur man-eater as an example of 'human-wildlife conflict' represents a strategy of anti-politics

754    (Ferguson, 1990), de-politicizing both the state and plantation owners' culpabilities in maintaining the uneven geographies through which dispossessed and marginalized workers

756    are more systematically made more vulnerable to carnivore attack than property-owning classes in the region.

758

The story of the Gudalur man-eater highlights how tiger biogeographic space and tiger space

760    as demarcated by the Forest Department and NTCA through the Tiger Reserve contest one another. As the protocol recommending that additional photographic evidence produced of

762    tigers and possible tiger numbers in social landscapes be withheld from the public suggests, there is, on the one hand, the intractable notion in tiger conservation management efforts in

764    India that tigers *should* live in government notified tiger protected areas, *not* elsewhere. And yet on the other, we see in this procedural action the acknowledgement by conservation

766    experts within the bureaucratic apparatus that this is simply false—tigers *do* live outside Tiger Reserves. But in 'straying out' the tiger crossed a threshold of uncertainty between

768    biopolitical space and necropolitical space as conservation subject. The tiger also, through its

       unruliness, offers us an embodied geographic critique of state visions of animal space and the

770    division between that which is human and that which is not. As Youatt (2008) writes,

       "because nonhumans constitutionally (rather than intentionally) refuse to internalise the

772    meanings of human language, they are able to resist becoming self-regulating subjects to a

       significant extent, relying instead on their own semiotic interpretations of the environment

774    and acting according" (394). The tiger's mobility, in this sense, is inscribed with political

       significances, producing geographic contestations.[11] At the same time, as a formally

776    recognized endangered species with strict laws regarding their protection and killability,

       tigers carry the law of the state in their very being, (re)producing spaces in which differential

778    valorizations of life across the species divide are acted out. In this context, it does not seem

       an exaggeration when residents of the Gudalur area would exclaim that their lives were worth

780    less than that of the tiger, for in many ways it is hard to see it as otherwise.


782    6. CONCLUSION


784    In this article I have shown how an analysis of the killing of a 'man-eater' in India requires

       engaging with the postcolonial political economy of the plantation landscape, and in doing

786    so, presented biodiversity conservation as necropolitics. An analysis of the man-eating tiger

       in Gudalur, in its entangled relations with a host of other actors, reveals plantation landscapes

788    as *less-than-human* necropolitical landscapes. Considering the death of the Gudalur man-

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[11] While discussing the active capacities of the tiger, it is beyond the scope of this article to interrogate deeper questions about the tiger's agency and the growing literature on animal sentience within animal studies and animal geographies. However, I agree with Chris Wilbert (2006: 32), who writes about the agency of man-eaters, that it is helpful to think of animal agency as an *intra-active* process of becoming (following the work of Karan Barad), not internal to the individual subject but an emergent relation between beings, which draws attention to "the promiscuous mixings of our worlds."

eater in the context of necropolitics is to interrogate how the state responds when tigers

790   transform from biopolitical subjects to unruly individuals, and how the value of various kinds

of species lives are inscribed in space in relation to one another. In arguing for a reading of

792   this plantation-conservation landscape as a necropolitical landscape, I have sought to advance

engaging with animals as political subjects (Barua, 2014; Hobson, 2007; Srinivasan, 2016),

794   embroiled in (re)producing unjust political geographies of difference across species divides.


796   In advancing my argument, I drew on Achille Mbembe's (2003) theory of necropolitics for

analyzing conservation geographies of deadly human-animal encounter within postcolonial

798   landscapes. I did so in order to clarify the necessity of engaging with conservation landscapes

as entwined products of colonial and postcolonial histories of capitalist accumulation by

800   dispossession (Rai et al., 2018). My analysis of the space of deadly encounter between a

'man-eater' in Gudalur is therefore situated in a historical reading of the plantation landscape

802   as a zone of spatial exception. In analyzing both the political economic history of this

plantation/conservation landscape alongside the procedures and practices of making the man-

804   eater, I advance the value of necropolitical theory for understanding of some of the relations

between animals and the state. I did so by considering the production of acceptability of

806   death—both human and non-human alike—within a contested geography of both high

conservation and agricultural commodity production value.

808

The case of the Gudalur man-eater is advanced through engaging with political animal

810   geography as a subdisciplinary field of scholarship seeking to reinvigorate animal

geographies with stronger attention to human politics and to expand political geography's

812   engagement with animals as complex subjects worthy of intellectual engagement. The

general lack of attention in political geography to animals as more than natural resources that

814    carry political significations has stunted theorizing the role and relations of animals to state

power, despite a reinvigorated body of work bringing the state and its effects 'back' into

816    contemporary discussions of the environment (Lunstrum 2018; Parenti, 2014; Robertson &

Wainwright, 2013). There is much to be gained from continuing efforts to read across sub-

818    disciplinary boundaries to develop more theoretically robust scholarship on animal relations

with the state.

820

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8. FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure 1. Number of reported tigers residing within Mudumalai National Park by year. Data obtained from the Tiger Conservation Plan for Mudumalai Tiger Reserve prepared for the National Tiger Conservation Authority (Singh, 2014).

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Figure 2. Tamil Nadu Forest Department jeep burned during protests following a prior

1066 incident of a man-eating tiger near Nellakotta, Gudalur in 2015.

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1084 9. TABLES

**Table 1.** List of tea plantations in Gudalur taluk, Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu, India. Area planted and grant area shown are official records presented in hectares rounded to the nearest whole number. Percent in cultivation is the area planted divided by grant area as a percentage. Data sorted by tea area planted. Data is from 2015 and obtained from International Tea Database (www.teadatabase.com) and used with permission. TANTEA is the acronym of the government owned Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation Corporation.

| Name | Company | Area Planted | Grant Area | Percent in Cultivation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wentworth Tea Estate | Harrisons Malayalam Ltd | 611 | 1361 | 45 |
| Rockwood Tea Estate | Hindustan Unilever Limited | 433 | 877 | 49 |
| Cherangode Tea Division | TANTEA | 394 | 394 | 100 |
| Davershola Tea Estate | Thiashola Plantations Private Limited | 357 | 1491 | 24 |
| Marapalam Tea Division | TANTEA | 350 | 510 | 69 |
| Kolappalli Tea Division | TANTEA | 344 | 416 | 83 |
| Cherambadi Tea Division | TANTEA | 342 | 390 | 88 |
| Nelligalam Tea Division | TANTEA | 334 | 335 | 100 |
| Attikunna Tea Estate | M/S Parry Agro Industries Ltd. | 328 | 913 | 36 |
| Devala Tea Division | TANTEA | 324 | 444 | 73 |
| Mayfield Tea Estate | Harrisons Malayalam Ltd | 308 | 807 | 38 |
| Strathern Tea Estate | Parry Agro Industries Ltd. | 305 | 632 | 48 |
| New Hope Tea Estate | Manjushree Plantations Ltd. | 299 | 3461 | 9 |
| Seaforth Tea Estate | Mahavir Plantations Ltd. | 275 | 1034 | 27 |
| Caroline Tea Estate | Parry Agro Industries Ltd. | 260 | 563 | 46 |
| Terrace Tea Estate | United Plantations Ltd., | 239 | 239 | 100 |
| Glenvans Tea Estate | Manjushree Plantations Ltd. | 238 | 3045 | 8 |
| Devon Tea Eatate | Hindustan Unilever Limited | 209 | 757 | 28 |
| Quinshola Tea Estate | TANTEA | 206 | 213 | 96 |
| Sussex Group Tea Estate | Woodbriar Estate Ltd. | 197 | 533 | 37 |
| Woodbriar Tea Estate | Woodbriar Estate Ltd. | 162 | 343 | 47 |
| Rousdon Mullai Tea Estate | Rousdonmullai Tea Estates Pvt. Ltd. | 122 | 359 | 34 |
| Royal Valley Tea Estate | Sampath Tea Industries (P) Ltd. | 111 | 186 | 60 |
| Periashola Tea Estate | Panchura Estate Limited | 107 | 246 | 43 |
| Barwood Tea Estate | Barwood Estate | 85 | 85 | 100 |
| Silver Cloud Tea Estate | Silver Cloud Tea Estates (P) Ltd. | 72 | 104 | 69 |
| Bitherkadu Tea Estate | Woodbriar Estate Ltd. | 55 | 85 | 64 |
| Udayagiri Tea Estate | Sri K. Gopalakrishnan | 47 | 48 | 98 |
| Kurunberbetta Tea Estate | Shri K.P. Madhavan Nair | 45 | 45 | 100 |
| Kusumam Tea Estate | Kusumam Tea Plantations | 39 | 39 | 100 |
| Visalakshi Tea Estate | Visalakshi Estate. | 38 | 61 | 63 |
| Glenrock Tea Estate | Glenrock Estates Pvt. Ltd. | 32 | 187 | 17 |
| Nadukani Tea Estate | Nadukani Plantations Ltd. | 32 | 130 | 25 |
| Kalleri Tea Estate | Thai Plantations Ltd. | 31 | 43 | 73 |
| Bernside Tea Estate | Smt. E.R. Wapshare & Co. | 24 | 24 | 100 |
| Nelliyalam Tea Estate | TANTEA | 23 | 23 | 100 |
| Panchura Tea Estate | Panchura Estate Limited | 22 | 201 | 11 |
| Kumarappa Plantations Tea Estate | Shri A. Kumarappan, | 21 | 98 | 21 |
| Surrey Tea Estate | Shri S.V. Pappu Chettiar | 20 | 20 | 100 |
| Parkglen Tea Estate | Parkglen Estate | 20 | 20 | 100 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| C.T.A. Tea Estate | C.T. Alvikutty & K. Pathuma Ltd. | 10 | 10 | 100 |
| Sudarsana Tea Estate | Sudarsana Estate Private Ltd. | 10 | 10 | 100 |
| Solai Malai Tea Estate | Shri S.S.P. Subramanium Chettiar | 10 | 12 | 79 |
| Mani Tea Estate | Shri S.S.P. Subramanium Chettiar | 10 | 10 | 100 |
| Gavipara/ Nalini Tea Estate | Elixir Plantations Pvt. Ltd. | 10 | 10 | 100 |
| Shri Meenakshi Tea Estate | Shri K.M. Kashi M.A | 5 | 21 | 24 |

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**Table 2.** Estimated number of tigers per state and Western Ghats landscape (total) between 2006-2014. Numbers acquired from the National Tiger Conservation Authority. 2014 total is slightly higher than combined totals for three states presented because 2014 census included the state of Goa. Percentage change in tiger populations between census years listed in parentheses for comparison.

| | 2006 | 2010 | 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Karnataka | 290 | 300 (3.5) | 406 (35.3) |
| Kerala | 46 | 71 (54.4) | 136 (91.6) |
| Tamil Nadu | 76 | 163 (114.5) | 229 (40.5) |
| Western Ghats (Total) | 402 | 534 (32.8) | 776 (45.3) |