

Tanzania 1982

Soit Ayai

Kopje knobs surmount the plain,
some like skull caps,
some like tortoise shells,
some like Chinese puzzles falling apart,
some like neolithic strongholds
or councils of stone.

Kopjes are old.
Precambrian.
The basement of the sky.
The bone of Africa,
upon which rest the newcomers
Kilimanjaro and Ol Doinyo Lengai.

Kopjes collect the heat of the day
and glow in the evening light,
russet granite with grains of pink quartz,
sun stained and warm to touch,
etched, creased and solid.
Kopjes welcome life.
Lichen orange, white, yellow and black
adorn the mottled hide
like rough rouge and eye shadow.
Feathergrass, bamboo grass and red oat grass
prosper between the stony thighs.
Orchids and aloe adorn granite brows
and fig leaves wreath the smooth pate.

Hyrax and owls are found here.
Kilpspringer and lion too.
White hyena scats fertilize a fire lily.

A community of kopjes squat at Soit Ayai
between stargrass plains and whistling thorn
woodland.

We camp here two nights
out of the fifteen billion
that have passed these stones.

