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"'Reordering and Counterordering': Forestry Preservation, Bush Clearing and the Sociophysical Mapping of Chepalungu, Kericho District, Kenya, 1930-1963"

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Recent research on Africa has emphasised conservation and trypanosomiasis control as the major factors, which first motivated colonial officials and scientists to embark on forestry preservation and bush clearing policies in colonial Africa. This paper, drawing on recent emphasis on the high modernist nature of colonial policies in general, contends that in Chepalungu, Kenya, forestry preservation and bush clearing were implemented with the objective to create a racially and tribally segregated landscape—not merely to conserve the landscape and control trypanosomiasis. Whereas colonial policies have commonly been generalised into imposed instruments of power which local people merely submitted to or resisted, this paper argues that the bush clearing and forestry preservation in Chepalungu unfolded in ways that exceeded imposition and resistance. The colonial officials and Kipsigis inhabitants of Chepalungu were not only in conflict with each other; they were also in negotiation over the use of the environment. In the process policies were adapted to local Kipsigis practices, just as Kipsigis interests were insinuated into the policies. Thus, just as conflicts were central in the policy making, tangled processes also played a significant role.

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