



## Colonial Shadows: The Deforestation of Kakamega Forest; 1933-1963

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### ABSTRACT

*Kakamega Forest is one of the unique ecosystems in Kenya since it is one of the remaining tropical ecosystems in the country. Kakamega forest has received a lot of government attention spanning from 1933 when it was first gazetted by the colonial government. As is the case with other forests, it has experienced contestations and contentions regarding how the government of the day manages it. Since the gazettelement back in 1933, the government adopted a 'top-down' model which ignored completely the concerns and position of the locals, who had for many years interacted with the forest. Therefore, based on this, the paper traces the historical trajectory of the conservation of the forest from the time it was gazetted in 1933. The objective of the study was to examine the government's approach to the management of the forest and the reactions of the locals towards its conservation. The study adopted a historical approach in which heavy reliance on archival sources was pursued. These entailed the development plans; Forest Department reports as well as the Annual District reports. To complement the archival sources, oral informants were conducted using purposive and snowball were sampling. The inclusion criteria were those who were aged above 60 years and lived adjacent to the forest. It was established that the government's gazettelement of the forest was followed by heavy logging and the interests of the locals were largely ignored. Besides, the study was able to establish that there were frosty relationships between the Forest Department and the people from the myriad of petitions that they were able to present. The study recommends that the Kenya Forest Service ought to prioritize the concerns of the community in the conservation strategy that it adopts. The authors believe that the study will be of benefit to conservation stakeholders, historians, and*

*scholars in the environmental realms.*

**Key words: Conservation Management, Community Engagement, Historical Trajectory**

### I. Background

According to Denzau and North (1994), the significance of forests to human existence cannot be overstated; this is because of the enormous role they play concerning the following: Besides acting as water catchment areas, forests are home to a wide range of plants and animals which help to foster biodiversity; in addition, they are not only sources of timber for paper industries, but they are also crucial regulators of the atmosphere and micro-climate; when air is polluted, forests act as "lungs of the earth", that is, they help purify the air. Furthermore, Forests play an important role in regulating the rainfall regime. This is not to mention the invaluable role concerning the provision of resources such as herbal medicines that are useful to human beings and the socio-cultural role they play as sacred places for cultural rituals for communities where they are situated.

It is worth noting that forests have been in existence since time immemorial and as such, people always relied on them for survival to that end, they had devised Indigenous systems of resource management that suited their needs; for example, in pre-colonial Africa, forests were valued and rules which guided their use were strictly enforced. These laws, though unwritten, ensured that forest resources were well utilized (Camara K & Dampha A, 2008). But when Europeans came, they pronounced proclamations on how forests were to be used and went ahead to gazette them as protected reserves. Most of these legislations were insensitive to the needs of the Africans who were the beneficiaries of



the forest resources; consequently, this encouraged the illegal exploitation of these forests (Esther M, 1998). During the period after independence, the government inherited the rules stipulated by the colonialists, which still could not avert the degradation scenario.

Ajiviti (2001) avers that a critical evaluation of forest conservation efforts introduced by the Europeans reveals that they largely failed to solve the problem of the continued decimation of forests, consequently, forests have continued to be threatened owing to many factors which include: overexploitation through uncontrolled human activities, illegal human settlements, loss of land resulting from encroachment of people into forest areas due to need to expand agriculture and poaching (Amadala, B., 2008). Kakamega Forest has, over the years been exposed to these activities; a closer look at the trends in the size of the forest reveals that the forest has been reducing in size; for example in 1933, when it was gazetted as a Protected area, it covered 28,199 ha, but by 1994, it had reduced to 24,000 ha and a further 18,887 by 2008 (Akala, 2003). This reduction of the forest, as earlier noted, was being witnessed despite the existence of conservation efforts that were aimed at averting the same, these efforts were initiated by the stakeholders in conservation, who included both Government Agents, namely KFS (Kenya Forest Service), formerly FD (Forest Department), the KWS (Kenya Wildlife Service), NEMA (National Environmental Management Authority), the NGO's, CBO's, and the forest adjacent communities. Consequently, the continued reduction in the forest cover sent alarm bells to the existence of this vital resource. This study therefore focused on the degradation of the Kakamega forest despite the existence of colonial laws aimed at conservation.

## 1.2 Research Objective

To examine the degeneration of Kakamega forest during the colonial period from 1933 to 1963

## II. Literature Review

The issue of conservation and destruction of forests, especially in Kenya, has phenomenally received greater attention in recent times yet the persistence of the same has been there; it is noteworthy to argue that over the years, especially beginning with the establishment of colonial rule in Kenya, forest destruction has been predominant and the peak was during the 1980's. Comparing estimates from the 1970s with the present day, studies indicate that there has been an increase in the rate of deforestation in Africa; For example, in Tanzania,

deforestation in the late 1980s was mainly driven by the need for timber, medicinal plants and commercialization of particular crafts, while in Mozambique, destruction of tropical forests was mainly a problem which occurred near urban areas. There has been unbridled tree cutting and encroachment by the local people into forest areas; as a result, this reduced the Haroni Forest from 20 ha to 2 ha. The once tropical forest was cleared little could be done to restore it; even if indigenous trees were to be planted, they would take a century to grow (Glydell, 1999).

In Malawi, the same situation was witnessed where about two-thirds of the forests that were confined in reserves still faced the threat of expanding cultivation. In 1986, a lack of sensitivity to conservation efforts was seen when one aid agency was subsidizing local sawmills to cut timber in eastern Usambara, though it was later stopped, it was after the damage had already been realized.

In Zimbabwe, although the Afromontane forest that was relatively extensive on the Eastern and Southern slopes of Nyanga and Vumba was a bit intact, the main threat was clearance for agriculture and frequent fires (Mitchell, 2009).

This continued destruction persisted despite there being policies towards conserving the same; therefore, this situation demands that the effectiveness of the established legal regime on conservation needs to be put into question. On the contrary, evidence can be adduced to prove that conservation efforts, especially in selected parts of South Africa, where natural Afromontane forests also existed, especially on the eastern Transvaal escarpment, have been successful (National Geographic, 1982). Owing to this successful management, these forest resources are less threatened. In Swaziland, the contrary is the case because the original Afromontane forest is even more confined and scattered in small remnant pockets along the escarpments adding up to only 60 square km. In Cote' de Vore, a nagging problem in the 1980s was the conservation of the country's forests; 25 years before, a third of the country was covered by dense forestland, but because of expanding agriculture and the need for timber, forests were covering less than 10% of the country by 1980 (Masibo, 2008). In Uganda, large tracts of land consisting of natural forest that covered the Lake Victoria islands were being cleared to establish large plantations of palm oil production. In Kenya, the areas around the Kakamega Forest belt were equally threatened by cash crop production in terms of sugar cane and tea growing.



The above examples point to the conclusion that although the issue of the conservation of forests in Africa has received deserved attention, the destruction of forest resources has been ongoing for many years. A clear focus on the Kenyan situation reveals the same; Lubanga and Mochida (2011) argue that although forests were in existence even before the coming of the colonialists, at that time people always relied on them for their livelihood, and to that end, developed systems that suited their needs and that of their descendants; Under traditional systems, various communities and councils of elders set rules of utilization and the rules of conservation. There were modes of punishment for offenders; hence there were policy guidelines which, though unwritten guided use and conservation. Thereafter came the next phase which characterized the entry of colonialists in Kenya in the nineteenth century. This period saw the British pronounce proclamations on what should be done with the forest resources in Kenya. This was done through restrictions of forest areas by way of forest gazettelement and the introduction of exotic species for afforestation. Various laws and rules were made to conserve forests, most of which failed to involve the locals fully in the process (Njuguna, P. and D. Mbithi, 1996). The post-colonial government continued to rely on colonial measures as a way of conserving forests, which proved futile until the 1990s. The government moved to establish policies that were integrative to the communities living around the forest, the culmination being the enactment of the 2005 forest policy.

In colonial Kenya, the conservation of forests was closely linked to the evolving political structures: As already noted, the colonial state dictated what should be done to forests without regard to the communities adjacent to the forests. According to Anderson, V, (1991), the conservation measures advocated by the colonialists were often stigmatized by the locals, creating a resistance to the governments of independent Africa, which have found difficult to overcome. According to Anderson, D (1989), in Lembus Forest, the British Government awarded licenses to commercial timber companies for the development of the timber industry even before their conquest was complete in a manner that proved that their conservation goals were not in tandem with those of the local communities, hence there ensued a conflict between the two. Such failures of the colonial government to deduce the fact that the failures of the colonial government conservation measures have sometimes left a powerful and undesirable legacy that the post-colonial governments failed to overcome (Agrawal, A.,

(1994). This is because the independent government inherited the colonial legacy that was left, the effect being on conservation; the local communities have over the years never felt part and parcel of the conservation of their forest resources and instead of cooperating with the government in conserving them, they have had a very unfriendly relationship which impacted negatively on conservation of the resources (Blaikie, P., & Brookfield. H, 1986).

The role of political factors in the conservation can be seen in the more recent events on the conservation of Mau Forest where conservation efforts on the forest met stiff resistance from the political establishment, this is despite the enormous role the forest plays as a water catchment area for many rivers which drain in Lake Nakuru (Mwangi P, 2004). As a result of these differences which accelerated continued destruction, water levels in rivers and boreholes continued to drop at alarming rates, especially around Nakuru. But despite the seriousness of the matter, politicians continued to trivialize conservation efforts by using the efforts as a tool to make political capital out of it (Amadala, B, 2008). Furthermore, the failures of past governments have been used to justify the continued destruction and encroachment of people into the forest. In Gwasi Forest, Oywa (2003) reported that the destruction of the forest has been ongoing over the years; a total of 24 streams flowing from the hills have dried. In five years, only 1% covers of the Forest remains in what was a tropical rainforest. He lays blame on the Government for not evicting squatters who despite a quiet notice continued to stay in the forest, apart from that, the government erred when it allowed these people to live in the forest for long hence they took advantage of that at the expense of the forest. A similar case was exemplified in Mount Elgon Forest; Government of Kenya. (2005). reported that human activities have over the years interfered with the hydrological cycle. According to records from the Forestry office, there is a very high environmental degradation as far as water catchment is concerned, this can be seen from the fact that rivers in the forest have been shrinking with time; By 1963, Cheptais and Kapsoro Divisions had 45 permanent rivers, by 1975 they were 31, by 1985 they had reduced to 24 and further to 8 by 2001. This is a pointer to the conclusion that there is failure on the part of the conservationists, led by the government agencies.

The same observation can be noted concerning Kakamega Forest; According to Akala (2003), during the pre-colonial times, the traditional Luhya interaction with the forest was illustrated in socio-cultural activities hunting for meat, skins, feathers for different paraphernalia and ornaments.



At the clan level, specific people or families were responsible for the harvesting of resources. Among the Tiriki who form one of the sub-tribes of the Luhya and also inhabitants of part of the forest, the specialists included the families of Jumba Mtswenye, Musuulisa, *Abamanyi* (Knowledge keepers) and *Avashevi* (Circumcisers). This suggests that culture played a pivotal role in conservation of the biodiversity and it impacted on extraction of forest resources; although there were no formal rules, the informal ones helped to check against cases of unbridled cutting of trees and hence destruction of the environment. However as will be noted, most of these traditional Luhya practices were eroded with the coming of the colonialists who introduced conservation approaches that were insensitive to the indigenous systems of resource management as practiced by these forest-adjacent communities.

According to Guthiga & Mburu (2006), early records indicate that the first forest boundary of Kakamega Forest was physically established around 1908-1910. This boundary was modified in 1912-13 and much later in 1929-1932. The Annual Government Report of 1918 indicated that there was opposition by the local community to any sort of control of the forest by the government. At that time, the Kakamega forest was managed by the local people through their village elders who were responsible to the Local Native Council (LNC). In 1931, the Forest Department (FD) took over the management of the forest against a very strong objection by the local people KNA (KNA18/1/78). Despite the local people's opposition, Kakamega Forest was gazetted as trust land on 13th February 1933. This meant that, although the forest would remain the property of the local community, the government would manage it on their behalf.

However during the colonial days, various massive disturbances occurred; gold mining and logging, timber extraction by saw millers, wood collection, charcoal burning, and encroachment into the forest by the local people. In an attempt to respond to the growing discontentment among the locals, a few customary rites were reinstated by special rules issued in 1959 and 1964 allowing residents the right to use the forest for grazing, cultivation, and collection of firewood, but in 1964, the forest was declared a central government forest, which in practice meant that it was completely transferred from the local community to the nation as a whole (KNA/VF/12/3). In 1971, the government launched the rural afforestation extension scheme in a bid to restore the highly depreciating forest cover, the challenge that it faced however, was that the services were inadequate because the tree nursery

where seedlings were tendered was situated far from the people who were supposed to take the trees and plant them. In 1974, the government recognized the increasing encroachment of people into the forest and aimed to stop it. However, in subsequent years, Rai-Plywood and Elgeiyo Sawmills continued lumbering in the forest. According to the Forest Department data, with an average lumbering rate of approximately 10,400 cubic meters of indigenous trees, approximately 2,600 trees were lumbered per annum (Akala, B, 2003).

### III. Methodology

This study utilized the historical method in the collection, collation, and analysis of the data collected. First, archival documents were consulted from the Kenya National Archives. These were in the form of Annual Reports, government plans, District Reports, correspondence as well as memoirs. At the same time, oral informants were also consulted. They were targeted using purposive and snowball sampling in which those who had lived long enough (60 years and above) in the forest adjacent areas were first targeted and then they referred the researcher to those with similar criteria. The analysis involved thematic analysis in which the materials were arranged chronologically and analyzed as per the objective.

### IV. Findings and Discussions

The period leading to the 1940s saw the influx of a multiplicity of sawmills that were established and licensed to operate in Kakamega Forest; this move ran contrary to the efforts that were being put in place by the government to conserve the forest by way of deforestation (Adrian, 2003). For example, from 1933 to 1951, a total of nine sawmills operated at different times in the forest. They included: Tanganyika Concessions, Kenya Consolidated Goldfields, Risks, Kimingini, Mr. Kelly, Mitchell-Cotts, Kavirondo Gold Mines, Butaba, United, Tiriki, and Rondo Sawmills. In the 1940s, a lot of group felling was done at Isecheno, Allosi, and South East Malava Forest Station (KNA/VF/12/3). These sawmills did considerable damage to the forest, it looked like the FD was mandated to only issue licenses and oversee how much timber was lumbered as they get the royalties because, instead of regulating extraction, they encouraged it, yet they had the task of managing the resource on behalf of the Local Native Council. The stance which was taken by the Forest Department brought it on a collision course with the Local Native Council because of the accrued estimates raised from selling timber products, the LNC accused the FD of not availing accurate estimates of revenue that it was



getting from the business and preferred to give only net profits alone. This scenario exemplified the capitalistic angle in which the Forest Department had decided to transact Forestry matters (P/C/NZA/3/2/13).

In 1949, there were complaints from the Isukha Locational Council (ILC) concerning excisions in some of the forest areas, they argued against this move by the government, but in a rejoinder, the DC carried out a survey and he reported that the areas in question posed no great harm as the excisions had little effect on the population, this insensitivity to the grievances of the Isukha, later on, came to haunt conservation measures adopted by the government because it bred seeds of discord and contempt among Africans who later even challenged the government about their land rights (Akala, 2003). Meanwhile, the era of sawmills continued to offer the government a lot of revenue through timber logging royalties, for example, in 1950, they paid a royalty of 42,918.55 having extracted 114,370 cubic feet of timber from the forest. Pit sawyers on the other hand paid a royalty worth 343.74 while charcoal extractors paid 15,996. Such a significant amount of logging went against the intentions of conserving the forest, that is because of the huge volumes of timber that were extracted which did not correspond to the rate at which they were being planted (KNA/AGR/5/3/1).

In 1951, some 30 acres of forest land at Liboona were excised in exchange for land granted to the Roman Catholics for the sake of setting up a Mission Center (Esther, 1998). The Annual Government Report of 1951 surprisingly blamed the three sawmills that were operating in the forest for not being able to utilize the concessions given to them to lumber trees fully. In addition to sawmills, pit sawyers lumbered 13,922 cubic feet of timber and paid 9,124 as royalty. Charcoal fuel paid 16,236.45 as royalty for collected fuel. The disinterest of the locals in the colonial conservation measures on Kakamega Forest was seen when, in the same year, out of 135,000 tree seedlings that were raised that year in nurseries for the sake of reforestation, only 100 of them were bought by Africans, at the same time, there was continued commercialization of timber products, a lot of emphasis was vested in the monetary returns the government got from timber logging. For instance, in 1951, three sawmills operated in the forest which removed a total of 116,335.05 cubic feet of timber and paid a royalty of 11,162.35, while pit sawing increased their extraction to 56,593 and attracted a royalty of 2,278. This resulted in a considerable loss of the forest cover of about 800 acres out of which only 350 acres were replanted (KNA/VF/12/3). This explains the reason

why satellite reports on Kakamega Forest over the years indicated that between 1948 and 1952; a lot of indigenous trees were destroyed and replaced with grassland.

The Annual Report of 1952 reported that all mills working in the forest were working consistently throughout the year, the tonnage of timber extracted that year alone was 50,000 cubic feet in 1952, which meant that extraction was high. In 1954, it was realized that the system of tending seedlings and growing them for Africans was wasteful and inefficient; therefore it was proposed that farmers should grow their trees from seeds, this again demonstrated the mismatch that existed between the key stakeholders, namely the locals and the government, the forester Kakamega Forest Station even admitted that he had not yet been able to overcome the suspicion and hostility of the local inhabitants who did not oppose the fundamental idea of establishing forests but who were unwilling to give up their rights to their land (KNA/AK/2/79).

The 1950s signified another change in the political environment which served to limit the Forest Department's freedoms and resulted in severe conflicts between local government administration and the Forest Department (KNA13/1/2/12). Hostilities engendered between the Forest Department and local communities were used as part of the local community's reasons for agitating for independence from British rule. The local government administration's attempts at pacifying the locals did not succeed because the Forest Department's reservation exercise continued to ignore the land needs and rights of local communities. Attempts at getting the forest department to redefine its reservation process resulted in further tensions between the forest department and the local government. The formulation of the Cryndon definition by the Governor, which restored local community rights to forest products in certain forests, epitomized the tensions between the local administration and the Forest Department. Once again forest department's policies were subordinated in favor of defusing political situations that would threaten/undermine political administration by the local government (Kakamega Forest Participatory Management Plan, 2011).

Concerning Kakamega Forest, the assertiveness of the Africans against the colonial measures on conservation took a new twist in 1954 when the inhabitants of the Ishirere area petitioned a decision by the DC to have them evicted from the land they considered theirs, but it was claimed that it



lay within the forest boundary. They argued that the land was legally theirs since they had successfully won a court case in 1953 which saw them being granted the right to stay on the land; In a letter addressed to the PC Western, the petitioners, led by Mr. Jidila Muganzi, who had solicited 183 signatures from the affected people, argued that it was unfair for the DC North Nyanza, Mr. Luke, to quash the court's decision and insist on having them evicted from the forest glades. The PC asked for a briefing from the DC on what had happened and the circumstances leading to it, the DC informed him that the complaints raised by the people of Ishirere were baseless since they had violated the Chief's standing orders by cultivating in the forest, which was against the law (KNA/AK/2/79).

This triggered a sharp reaction from the advocate representing the complainants of Ishirere, Mr. Ross. He challenged the decision in 1955 and informed the PC that the DC's action was illegal and that the complainants were within their legal framework to advocate what was going to be snatched from them. The PC thereafter raised the matter to the governor; however, the governor wittingly declined to intervene and instead reminded the complainants that it is important to always follow the correct channels of communication when raising their grievances (KNA/AK/2/79). This issue took a new twist when the secretary of African Affairs raised concerns over the Ishirere Issue; he petitioned the governor in a letter and reminded him that the area in question was alienated as a forest reserve from about 1912 up to 1936 after which it was handed over to the Local Native Council. He also brought to his attention the fact that up to 1949, the land was covered with dense forestland and that the Isukha Location Council decided that it should be cleared the resolution was minuted, and agreed that those who lost their land when schools and churches were being constructed be given the land, he further told him that at about 1952, people encroached in the forest without permission with the intent of cultivating in it and substantially reduced the forest cover (Ascher, W.,1995).

The governor on his part ruled that the status quo be retained. Indeed, this was the period in which the government lost forest cover due to excisions; The Forest Department's disregard for indigenous populations' rights and their reluctance to compensate natives for their loss of access to forest goods and services met with strong disfavor and opposition from local government officials and an increasingly discontented native population. This made the administrative job so difficult particularly during the 1950's due to the rising political

consciousness and re-assertion of native rights and national freedom (KNA REF NO./MIN/68). The Administration insisted that the Forest Department reinstate native rights and reservations. The government officials felt that the Forest Department should clarify its boundaries and insisted that the Department give up some grazing areas, salt licks, and watering holes and provide land for cultivation by dispossessed right holders, without such concessions, the discontent was inevitable, especially in Kakamega Forest. This was seen when the Forest Department claimed land without considering the rights of local inhabitants and imposed strict regulations on the use of forest products by forest-adjacent communities, native rights to the forest were not recognized.

Meanwhile, the conservation approach of 'fence and fine' dominated the period between 1954 and 1963; this is demonstrated in the number of cases of those who were found violating the forest laws, however, it was observed that in as much as the offenders continued to be arrested and prosecuted, forest destruction persisted and the number of offenders caught bore little proportion to the actual number of offenses committed. Moreover, the existence of sawmills continued to have a tremendous effect on the forest cover. The government continued to enforce stringent measures at the micro-level; for example, in 1958, the African Council passed the resolution that it would collect 25 shillings per heard of cattle being permitted to graze in the forest, in reality, this move was a tall order to be achieved because the locals could not manage to pay such an amount just for grazing when they could still do it illegally (KNA/ DC/NN1/31). Arguably, the DC North Nyanza Hon RC Wilson justified this move by saying that if this revenue is collected, then there would be good hope of putting the forest on a sound financial footing, he asserted that this, together with plantation of timber would make a fairly reasonable paying concern for the next ensuing 5 to 6 years.

At the same time, with the continuance of logging at a macro level, loss of forest cover was tremendously witnessed; the result of this was decreased revenue for the government. This event necessitated a wide array of cost-cutting measures since the revenue had declined, for example, in 1955, the Forester, in a bid to adjust to the new realities, cut down his emoluments so low that it became necessary to lay off 50% of the labor for 3 months during the year, this move was aimed at cutting down the deficit of 500 pounds (Akala, B., 2003). Furthermore, an alteration of the planting program of the year was necessary; instead of planting in six places, to a total of 300 acres, as planned earlier, only



260 acres were done (Mungatana, E., 1999).

This mistake greatly impacted the forest cover because as the lack of corresponding replanting persisted, logging was still in place throughout the year. According to Anderson, D. (1989) in 1960, owing to this tremendous loss of Forest cover, there were plans to have Kakamega Forest re-classified as 'underdevelopment' rather than a productive forest; the reason for this move was that part of its destruction was because of illegal use. Therefore considerable pressure was brought from the African District Council for the boundaries to be revisited and open other areas for cultivation. However, this view failed to take cognizance of the massive lumbering that was in place at that time, the same year witnessed a total of 460 acres of new planting being carried out, which, as the previous ones, did not correspond with the high rate of deforestation that was being carried out especially by the saw millers, not to mention illegal forest exploitation by the local community.

## V. Conclusion

This study has focused on the degeneration of Kakamega Forest from the time it was gazetted in 1933 until the independence period in 1963; this was a period in which the colonial government entered and fully anchored their control in the forest, this was after it gazetted the forest as a national resource and went ahead to restrict the local communities from accessing the resource. However, what followed was a widespread plunder by sawmills which operated under the license given by the Forest Department which did the forest a great blow. Efforts to resuscitate the increasingly reducing forest cover by the government, in collaboration with an NGO called The Kenya Abor Society were met with cold feet, especially by the locals who did not understand the reason as to why they should conserve the forest yet they were not allowed to use it. Therefore, the afforestation efforts were largely unsuccessful because the rate of the destruction of the forest did not correspond with that of the high rate of afforestation that was taking place.

At the same time, the resistance of Africans against the colonial conservation methods began to manifest itself in the legal battles in which the people adjacent to Kakamega Forest engaged the Forest Department. This was at a time when there was growing consciousness among Africans on their land rights and they used the newly found environment to put to task the government to justify why they neglected their rights and evicted them from the forest glades, yet they claimed that the land in question belonged to them. This determination by Africans however did not change the approach of the

government towards the forest; it continued with the fences and fines approach. This approach did more harm than good concerning the retention of the forest cover; a lot of indigenous trees were cut thanks to the widespread saw milling endeavors that were sanctioned by the government, it even threatened to withdraw licenses to those mills that were not using it well (lumbering a lot of tonnage), this is because of the royalties which these mills were bringing to the Government, as this was happening, the future of the forest took a back seat. Even as the colonial government was preparing to hand the government to the new dispensation, concerning forestry, there were a lot of things that remained the same, and as shall be demonstrated, the same mode of operation continued, as such the transition did not affect Kakamega Forest positively. Therefore, the period between the gazette of the forest and the period before independence was characterized by three things: Widespread sawmilling by licensed saw millers; Restriction and barring of the locals from using, accessing, and benefiting from the resource, and lastly, a growing consciousness among Africans which led them to assert their stance against this mistreatment by the colonial government, but as noted earlier, such moves were met with a blind eye and ear by the government, hence advancing the occurrence of the status quo which proceeded to the next phase.

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