

UTILIZATION OF VEGETATION BY THE SANDAWE PEOPLE IN A SEMI-ARID AREA OF TANZANIA

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Abstract

The Sandawe are one group belonging to the Khoisan people. Although they presently live on cultivation, it is suggested that they were bush foragers until the 19th century. The objective of this paper is to describe the current situation of their livelihood from a variety of aspects, in order to understand the various changes, caused principally by the experience of settlement, in their survival strategies and perception of nature.

My field research was carried out in a village in central Tanzania for a total of nine months. I conducted ecological surveys, including the collection of botanical specimens and soil samples, and vegetation surveys to quantify the characteristics of the natural environment. I made a vegetation map of the study area and its environs. In addition, I obtained descriptive and quantitative data on the Sandawe's livelihood system by participant observation and interviews.

Based on the vegetation surveys and an aerial photograph of the study area, I was able to distinguish several different vegetation types around the village. Among them, three major patterns dominate the area, in a mosaic-like distribution. They use the surrounding mosaic of vegetation in a variety of ways, according to the characteristics of the vegetation. This means that they are able to make multiple choices for using the natural environment. As for why they were able to adopt agriculture and pastoralism while maintaining hunting and gathering, I would like to stress the following two points: the existence of a variety of vegetation in a mosaic-like pattern, and their profound knowledge of nature.