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Natural resource management: a function of environmental and ethnic specificities

Natural resource management in the context of the present paper refers to the management of agricultural products, such as grazing areas, flood recession planting, tree products and other similar resources. The use rights to land in Africa, and the methods of cultivation of the soil, as well as the acceptability of eating or using a wide variety of products are governed by customs, tribal rituals, and religious rulings and taboos. They have been established over generations, by a specific tribe, living in a specific biotope, where specific agricultural patterns have proved themselves to be the most efficient in terms of labor invested and harvesting results obtained. These behaviors are culturally embedded, enforced and protected by religious ritual taboos and very difficult to change – in any case only over long periods of time, gradually. I shall give specific examples.

Therefore any guideline concerning the appropriate method to survive in marginal lands cannot be generalized, but has to take the specific flora and fauna and the specific customs of the local population living in a given area into account. Technological findings, notably aerial photography allowing for comparisons over long periods of time helps to induce behavior changes, because the people will understand the natural phenomenon of long time change more easily.