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Abstract Title:

Rural Land Use Change in East Caprivi, Namibia (1970 - 2006)

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Abstract:

Climatic and hydrological conditions enabled the first Bantu communities to practice settled subsistence agriculture in the 18th and 19th centuries. Peripheral location and prevalence of malaria and cattle diseases made the area unsuitable for European and South African farmers, but also made the administration of East Caprivi difficult and therefore less interesting for colonial administrations. Nowadays, almost the whole area is intensively used for small-scale subsistence farming and agricultural practices have remained traditional. The present land use is mostly the outcome of the development that started in the 1970s after establishment of a military base of the South African Defense Force and was followed by a fast growth of both human and livestock population.

We studied the development of the area southeast of Katima Mulilo, the Salambala Conservancy using an air photo time series (1970, 1996 and 2006) to quantify the change in land use. Dwellings, cattle enclosures, fields and roads were digitized. The results show a definite increase in both cattle enclosures and roads.

Intensification of grazing and clearing of arable land to sustain the growing population was accommodated by a period of limited flooding, the present increased flow of the Zambezi River has created pressure for resettlement, also the creation of game conservancies and parks increases pressure on the

remaining land. Increased clearing and grazing have locally led to land degradation. The effects of AIDS related mortality after 1990 is clearly visible as a temporary decrease in arable land.

Keywords:

Land use change, Namibia, Caprivi