Between Rain Magic and Global Climate Collapse: Three Decades of Environmental Awareness among the Ndemboka, W.H.P./PNG

When ethno botanical fieldwork started among the Ndemboka tribes in 1970 who at this time inhabited the most parts of the Kubor Range in the Western Highlands Province of PNG the local population was still mainly based on traditional subsistence farming. The data collection concerning agricultural practice also included revealing facts focusing the strong awareness of the Ndemboka towards their ecological setting. According to oral lore there occurred various periods of marked climatical change resulting in shifting movements of the settlement and gardening areas in different altitudes ranging between several hundred meters during the last generations, which also could be proved by archaeological evidence. Regarding contemporary conditions most informants at the beginning of the last Seventies were convinced of gradually facing another severe change of climate which they concluded by a number of alarming signs within their environment obtained by observations of vegetation patterns and animal behaviour. As it turned out in the course of the following thirty years these conclusions were not only hypothetical but were to become evident as a matter of fact finally during the drought catastrophe at the end of last century.