Influence of culture on forest perception and use among the Ogiek in Kenya

INTRODUCTION: This study is part of a PhD project that aims to identify different stakeholders' attitudes, values and perceptions of forests. One of the stakeholder groups are the Ogiek a minority that has to struggle with the insecurity of the political situation as well as with unclear land ownership and marginalization. Nonetheless these forest dwellers have a close connectedness to the highland forests in Kenya.

AIM: The objective of the poster is to illustrate how the different abstract local values and attitudes among the Ogiek determine their forest perception and use. Beside this the changes of their lifestyle and to be in accordance with the change of their culture will be examined. How this change does influence their forest perception and use?

RESULTS: 

Frame conditions
- Large indigenous forests divided into traditional borders used by clans
- Education within the tribe
- Vivid practicing of ceremonies
- Traditional religion/world view/norms
Perceived reasons for changes
- Reduced forest size, plantation with exotic tree species, forest managed by the government (forest bill)
- Formal school education, life outside of the forest in villages
- Rituals are no longer practiced (e.g. circumcision)

Definition:
Culture incorporates all learned and practiced behavior in a society as well as the manner of behaving, thinking and feeling.

METHODS: Literature review, 4 qualitative interviews, participatory observation

Interview themes: Forest definition/description, Perception and meaning of the forest, Feelings inside the forest, Use of the forest, Religious and customary rules, Fairy tales, Myth, Cultivation of forest plants

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