

Strategic Young Researcher Overseas Visit Program for Accelerating Brain Circulation

Dispatch Report

Date: January 2013

Place of visit: Washington State University, USA

Name: Oishi, Takanori

- Research background

During the last decade, the penetration of the cash economy has accelerated in various parts of the tropical forest of central Africa. Forest dwellers of this region are experiencing drastic changes in their ecology (including subsistence activities), culture, and society. The extent and characteristics of the contact with the outside world varies considerably among different peoples.



Fig. 1. Washington State University at Vancouver, WA.

- Research purpose and aim

This study aims to examine the impact of lifestyle changes, such as the diversification of subsistence activities and sedentarization, on local people's life history strategies by means of cross-cultural research between various Pygmy hunter-gatherers (the Baka of southeastern Cameroon and the Aka of Central African Republic) and their neighbors (the Bakwele and the Ngandu). Evolutionary and ethnographic research approaches are employed.



Fig. 2. I visited a forest park in Portland, Oregon with a WSU researcher.

- Fieldwork results and achievements

I presented my research proposal at a research seminar. The critical points of the project were clarified and a theoretical perspective of the research was discussed with the participants. Although the quantity and quality of the first-hand data accumulated on the livelihoods, kinships, demography, and land use of local peoples were well received, it was pointed out that each data-set is described separately and was not effectively integrated into the analysis. The result is that although it has provided a detailed description of the “ecology” of a certain people, it cannot contribute to theoretical studies such as those on the evolution of human behavior and human life histories.



Fig. 3. I made a short visit to Newport on the west coast, where Dr. Barry Hewlett lives.

- Implications and impacts on future research

This research is expected to contribute to the understanding of the micro-evolution of inequality and equality in small-scale human societies.