

Strategic Young Researcher Overseas Visit Program for Accelerating Brain Circulation

Dispatch Report

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Place of visit: Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris, France

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- 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.

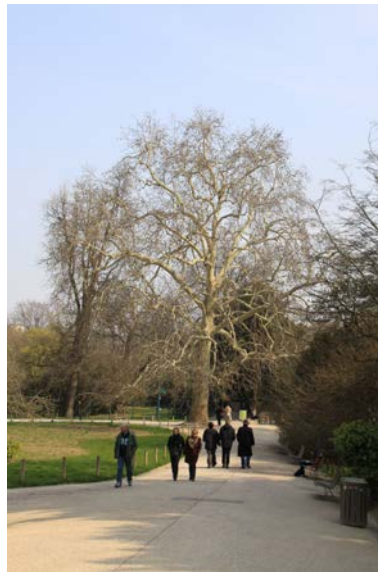


Fig. 1. MNHN is adjacent to the botanic gardens.

- 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 and their neighbors. Evolutionary and ethnographic research approaches are employed.

- Fieldwork results and achievements

I visited Dr. Serge Bahuchet at the Laboratory of Eco-anthropology and Ethnobiology of the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris. Dr. Bahuchet has studied the Aka of the Central African Republic for

40 years. I explained the outline of the research project and he advised me to also examine the sociocultural changes among forest-dwelling local peoples. I was also told that it may be useful to compare the Bakoya of Gabon to the Baka of Cameroon because they have also recently adopted agriculture, albeit in a different style than the Baka.

I also met with Dr. Eric de Garine of the Université de Nanterre Paris Ouest and Dr. Daou Veronique Joiris of the Université Libre de Brussels to discuss the project.



Fig. 2. In Brussels, I visited Matonge, the famous African quarter. I observed restaurant menus written in Lingala.



Fig. 3. Frozen cassava leaves imported from Cameroon at Matonge market, Brussels.

- Implications and impacts on future research

I was able to obtain different perspectives on conducting comparative research with researchers working in different spatio-temporal settings in the relevant areas in central Africa.