

# Strategic Young Researcher Overseas Visit Program for Accelerating Brain Circulation

## Dispatch Report

Year: 10 August 2013~10 September 2013

Place of fieldwork: Ethiopia

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- Research background

People in Asia and Africa have invented many utensils and tools that are used on a daily basis to adapt to the natural environment, enhance social relationships in communities, and influence the outside world. This research contributes to the development of a sustainable human sphere in Asia and Africa by describing the process by which local knowledge (*ZAIRAICHI*) related specifically to the body and bodily techniques, the domain that is most vulnerable to changes in global conditions and social institutions, is shared and disseminated.

- Research purpose and aim

The focus of this research includes the following three components: 1) fieldwork in Southwestern Ethiopia; 2) academic collaboration with the South Omo Research Center and Museum (SORC&M) at Addis Ababa University as well as with local communities, such as the South Omo People's Ensete Research Center (SOPERC); and 3) academic exchanges related to the results of my research at international conferences. This year, I will focus on the second and third components.

- Results and achievements by fieldwork

From August 11 to September 10, 2013, I carried out collaborative research activities at the South Omo Research Center and Museum (SORCM) regarding the special ensete exhibition, an Ethiopian indigenous plant. Thanks to the directors, local staff at SORCM, and local people at the research site, ensete project members, including an ethnobotanist on ensete from Kyoto University, a textile expert from Tama Art University, and myself presented a special exhibition on ensete usage, ensete drawings by school students, and development activities that are related to ensete project activities. We invited local musicians and dancers to present to all visitors on inauguration day. This exhibition is open until March 2014.

- Implications and impacts on future research

One of the important objectives of this stay was to open the special exhibition. I need to follow up on the visitors' reactions to this exhibit through visitor voting for ensete drawings. SORCM will start preparing for the second special exhibition. We provided simple and easy equipment for the special exhibition at SORCM. In addition, because the SORCM staff provided information on this special exhibition to the press, news of our activities reached locals and individuals all over Ethiopia. Unfortunately, there were not many locals around SORCM. Some school children who often come to the library institute attached to SORCM joined the event and inauguration. SORCM needs to focus on activities for adults in this area.

We are preparing future research activities to document the whole process of this special exhibition, and we will give a presentation at an international conference on the Museum that is organized by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University in the beginning of November. In addition, I am going to assist with the next special exhibition after November. In this special exhibition, we will form a bridge between research outcomes and development activities, such as producing ensete fiber products with school students. I exchanged ideas with local staff on objects at South Omo.



Photo 1 Ensete paper, which is made from ensete fiber. School children draw their daily activities related to ensete



Photo2 Confirming the position of each ensete drawing at the exhibition



Photo 3 Making simple equipment for hanging ensete drawings at the exhibition.



Photo 4 Inauguration on the opening day. SORC invited local governors and users of the library attached to the museum

Photo5 Several quizzes were prepared for museum visitors and photographs of ensete usage (right side). Ensete drawing by school children (left side)

