

Strategic Young Researcher Overseas Visit Program for Accelerating Brain Circulation

Dispatch Report

Period: From September 2013 to October 2013

Place of visit: Washington State University, USA

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- Research background

In the last decade, the penetration of cash economy has accelerated in various parts of the central African tropical forest. Forest dwellers of this region are experiencing drastic changes in their environment (subsistence activities), culture, and society. But the extent and characteristics of their contact with the outside world is highly variable among different peoples.

- Research purpose and aim

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

- Results and achievements of fieldwork

I advanced the analysis of the data on mate preferences of the Baka hunter-gatherers and the Bakwele farmers under the guidance of Drs. Barry Hewlett and Edward Hagen. On October 23<sup>rd</sup> \*\*3\*\*, I reported the preliminary results of the data analysis and discussed the direction of my further research. I also attended the classes of "Evolutionary Cultural Anthropology" and "Sex, Evolution, and Human Nature". In the middle of September, I made a visit to the main campus of WSU at Pullman. I was enormously impressed by the landscape, which is totally surrounded by vast wheat farms (photograph 1).



Photograph 1: Wheat farm surrounding the Pullman campus, WSU.

The Department of Anthropology has three divisions: Archaeology, Cultural Anthropology, and Evolutionary Anthropology. The Mini Museum of Anthropology charmed me with various materials from the Northwest coast and the other parts of the world (Photograph 2). I could see Dr. Courtney Meehan and the other members of African Research Group.



Photograph 2: Mini Museum at the Department of Anthropology, WSU.

I wrote one paper in English, two papers and six short communications in Japanese during my stay at WSU. I also advanced the preparation of my Ph.D dissertation which will be submitted to ASAFAS in the academic year 2013-2014. On October 28<sup>th</sup> 2013, I was invited to give a talk at the River Cities Anthropological Society, which is comprised of faculty and students of the WSU Vancouver campus. I spoke about the contents of the paper “Man–gorilla and gorilla–man: Dynamics of human–animal boundaries and interethnic relationships in the central African rainforest” and discussed how anthropologists can contribute to the reconciliation between local people and conservationists (Photograph 3).



Photograph 3: Lecture at The River Cities Anthropological Society.

- Implications and impact on future research

There is a distance between cultural anthropology and evolutionary anthropology in the US as well as in Japan. There are also several distinct approaches in evolutionary anthropology such as human evolutionary ecology and evolutionary psychology. Dr. Hewlett's Evolutionary Cultural Anthropology (ECA) is focusing on the micro mechanism of cultural transmission in human childhood. It is original in that it holds enormous potential to bridge the cultural and the evolutionary approaches. The theory and methodology of ECA can also be applied to the study of cultural change in relation to life histories of African rainforest dwellers. I would like to develop future research into the study of micro cultural evolution.