

PREFACE

The researchers from Kyoto University started their activities in Cameroon in 1958, when late Prof. Itani visited Dja Reserve for a preliminary survey on the gorillas. Unfortunately, however, intensive research on great apes was not conducted there. Instead, the primatological research had been focused on chimpanzees and bonobos in Tanzania and Congo-Kinshasa. In 1980s, a group from Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University, headed by Prof Kawai, entered into the Campo Reserve to study mandrills and other primates of Cercopithecidae. Biochemistry researchers and a forest ecologist also joined this group. The earlier research by Japanese scientists started in this way with the initiative of primatologists and other natural scientists.

Thirty-five years after the preliminary survey by Itani, a team from Kyoto University first embarked on the research in ecological anthropology in 1993. The major aim of the research was to clarify the relationships between man and nature in the tropical rainforest areas in Cameroon. In particular, the ecological relationships between hunting-and-gathering, slash-and-burn agriculture and the forest environment were investigated in the context of changing contemporary political and economic situations. Since then, more than 20 Japanese researchers and students have been involved in the study of ecology, economy, society and culture of the forest-dwelling peoples in the tropical forest areas in Cameroon.

The Cameroon researchers have, on the other hand, been carrying out their research of forest vegetation and animal ecology, in cooperation with the researchers from France, USA and ECOFAC, WWF, WCS and other international NGOs in almost the same areas of East Region of Cameroon. While their works have been known to Japanese researchers, two parties have been working independently, except for sporadic cooperation in research and exchange of research information on individual level.

The systematic cooperation in research by two parties was materialized through a new project of SATREPS (Scientific and Technological Research Partnership for Sustainable Development), which is part of Japanese overseas aid program. The project is titled "Establishing Sustainable Livelihood Strategies in Forest Areas of Cameroon," and aims at combining promotion of scientific research with the needs of local people, in the field of forest conservation and sustainable use of forest resources. The five-year project started in 2011.

The project consists of three components: (1) agro-ecological research aiming at intensification of agriculture and land use in a transitional area between the forest and savanna areas, in order to mitigate the forest cover loss by the expansion of cultivation into the forest areas, (2) research for sustainable use of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), to provide the people with alternative means of forest use to replace industrial logging, and (3) research on soil-ecological dynamics that sustains the agricultural and forest ecosystems. In this way, we combine

agricultural sector with that of the forest in a single project. It is our understanding that the problem of forest cover loss could not be solved within the forest sector alone, and that forest conservation must be supported by enhancing human carrying capacity through intensification of agriculture outside the forest. In other words, it is necessary to take a landscape approach, which combines different types of land use in addition to protected areas, in order to properly address the issue of forest conservation.

This supplementary issue consists of the interim reports of the NTFP component of the project. The NTFP team set a major research base at Gribe village of Boumba-Ngoko Department, East Region, and carried out the research on the ecology and use of NTFPs. Namely, it focused on the research on ecological potentials of NTFPs in the area, their importance to their livelihood and household economy, and social system that enables the sustainable use of the forest and resources with the initiative of local people. While research on NTFPs has been carried out in other sites of the project, such as Andom near Bertoua, and Bytili near Ebolwa, this supplementary issue consists of the articles based on the results from Gribe and surrounding areas.

Two years have passed since the members of the NTFP component have launched their studies in Gribe village and surrounding area. Today, we have obtained a lot of important data and findings from intensive field researches with interdisciplinary perspectives. This special issue was planned to publish such fruits toward an integrated approach for combining forest conservation with peoples' NTFPs uses.

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Masaaki HIRAI, Hirokazu YASUOKA,
Bernard-Aloys NKONGMENECK & Mitsuo ICHIKAWA