

VISITING PATTERNS OF TWO SEDENTARIZED CENTRAL AFRICAN HUNTER-GATHERERS: COMPARISON OF THE BABONGO IN GABON AND THE BAKA IN CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT Many groups of central African hunter-gatherers called Pygmies have sedentarized recently. They sometimes suffer discrimination by their neighboring farmers, because of general indifference from the governments, and because they do not adopt the modern state system. However, a different situation is seen among a group of the Babongo Pygmies in southern Gabon. The social disparity between the Babongo and their neighboring farmers is rather small. A comparison of the visiting patterns of the Babongo and the Baka in southeastern Cameroon demonstrated that (1) the Babongo and their neighboring farmers visited mutually while the Baka and their neighboring farmers did not, and (2) the Babongo visited the town frequently but not the Baka. Political, economic, and social situations in southern Gabon make the Babongo unique among the Pygmies, in that they have come to participate in the modern social system.

Key Words: Babongo; Baka; Pygmies; Sedentarization; Visiting patterns.

INTRODUCTION

There are several groups of hunter-gatherers, generally called “Pygmies”,⁽¹⁾ who have adopted a nomadic lifestyle in the central African rainforests (Turnbull, 1961). One of the characteristics of their nomadic lifestyle is fluidity in the membership of residential groups, in flux with the distribution of natural resources and the social situation.

Pygmies establish long-term, mutually dependent symbiotic relationships with farmers based upon economic exchanges, fictive kinships, shared ceremonies, and/or friendships (Joiris, 2003; Rupp, 2003; Terashima, 1998). In these relationships, Pygmies are generally absorbed into the social systems of the farmers with whom they become strongly linked (Grinker, 1994; Takeuchi, 2001), because of their flexible social systems and immediate return economies (Woodburn, 1982). Therefore, the relationships are often ambivalent in that the Pygmies and the farmers are mutually dependent on the one hand, but the Pygmies are socially distinguished from farmers on the other (Takeuchi, 2001). However, the competition for natural resources between the Pygmies and farmers has not been serious because of the great differences in residence and mode of life. When social conflict arises, Pygmies with the nomadic lifestyle could avoid it by migrating to other camps. If there was discrimination against Pygmies from farmers, it was latent.

Recent studies on the Baka in Congo and Cameroon and the Babongo in

Gabon showed that they now live sedentarily along the roadside (Kitanishi, 2006; Knight, 2003; Matsuura, 2006; Sato, 1992). Their membership in residential groups has become more stable in the sedentary lifestyle. One reason for the sedentarization by the Pygmies is the implementation of sedentary policies by the governments in the 20th century. Although these policies aimed to provide local people with health care, education, and other services, they actually facilitated tax collection and control of the local people. In the name of civilization and development for the “backward” peoples, the Pygmies were forced to adopt a sedentary lifestyle and to participate in the modern state system (Kenrick, 2005; Knight, 2003; Lewis, 2005). Infiltration of monetary economies, increases in the gun hunting and bush meat trades, and the construction of roads and railways have also influenced the sedentarization of Pygmies (Bahuchet & Guillaume, 1982; Knight, 2003; Sato, 1992).

After Pygmies settled and the membership of residential group became relatively stable, the communication between Pygmies and farmers has increased while their lifestyle differences have decreased. According to a study on the Aka Pygmies in Central African Republic, the sedentary Aka had a wider circle of acquaintances among the neighboring farmers and more frequently engaged in labor for farmers, such as hunting for bush meat and working in plantations, than the nomadic Aka (Hewlett et al., 1982). Modern state systems such as school education, elections, and local administration, also infiltrated the sedentarized Pygmy societies. However, the modern systems are not accommodating of the lifestyle of Pygmies, and the Pygmies find it difficult to adapt to the modern systems due to the lack of a rigid social system within their society. As a result, neighboring farmers who have embraced the modern systems often become more dominant than the Pygmies (Ichikawa, 2001: 27-28; Lewis, 2005). According to a study on the Bagyeli Pygmies in southwestern Cameroon, some group of Bagyeli who once sedentarized in the 1960s returned to the forest camps to avoid social conflicts with the farmers (Biesbrouck, 1999).

In the 1970s and 1980s, as concessions for logging and mining in the forests increased, exploitation of natural resources by the European companies expanded into the local communities. After about a decade, conservation programs led by foreign NGOs came to the local communities, comprising many international opinions on how to conserve the tropical forests. Because both of these operations usually communicated only with the farmers and ignored the Pygmies, although their traditional lifestyle is ironically more firmly bonded with the forests, the domination by the farmers and the marginalization of Pygmies intensified (Kenrick, 2005; Knight, 2003; Lewis, 2005).

As shown above, the discrimination against the Pygmies from farmers has spread widely in the process of Pygmy sedentarization and interaction with the modern state. It is reported that a logging company and a conservation project precipitated a conflict between the farmers and the Baka in southeastern Cameroon (Hattori, 2008). When the logging company paid out compensation for the local community, the farmers obtained ten times more money than the Baka. The members of a conservation project committee for the management of natu-

ral resources were composed mainly of farmers. When environmental education was started in the village, the Baka did not show much interest, and only looked on from outside while the farmers earnestly discussed the conservation project (Hattori, 2008).

However, discrimination is not seen against all the sedentarized Pygmy societies. According to my previous studies, highly sedentarized groups of the Babongo Pygmies in southern Gabon are not dominated by nor employed by the Massango farmers, and intermarriage between the Babongo and Massango occurs not only between the Massango men and Babongo women but also between the Babongo men and Massango women (Matsuura, 2006). In the rituals, both Babongo and Massango participate in and play equally significant roles, and they share the same ritual norms (Matsuura, 2007). I observed that the Babongo participated in political meetings in the village with the Massango, and that they both worked together to solve problems. There appears to be less social disparity between the Babongo and Massango, compared to other Pygmy-farmer relationships.

To demonstrate the characteristics of the Babongo's interethnic relationships with the Massango, I examined the visiting patterns comprised of visiting activities and personal experiences of trips and compared them with those of the Baka in southeastern Cameroon, because visiting is a basic daily activity in which social relationships can be clearly viewed (Sugawara, 1988; Hitchcock, 1982; 2004). Based on the literature that Pygmy-farmer relationships have changed in the process of Pygmies' sedentarization, I will focus on the two highly sedentarized groups of Babongo and Baka. By comparing the visiting patterns of the sedentary Babongo and Baka, I will point out the differences between them, and discuss how the Babongo are less discriminated against by the Massango.

RESEARCH SITES AND SUBJECTS

I. The Babongo

I conducted field research in Département de l'Ogoulou, Province de la Ngounié in southern Gabon (Fig.1) for nine months in total (July to October 2003, November 2004 to February 2005, and May to August 2005). The dry season is from July to September in this region. Villages are located at intervals of 5-10km along the road and inhabited by the Babongo Pygmies and the Bantu farmers called the Massango. The Babongo build rectangular huts similar to those of the Massango, and many live without spatial separation from Massango in the same village. Although the Babongo sometimes visit other villages or forest camps, they spend about 80% of days in their village (Matsuura, 2006).

Agricultural products are the most important source of calories for the Babongo. They cultivate cassava as well as plantain, maize, banana, and pea-



Fig. 1. Research site in Gabon

nuts in their own fields. There are sufficient agricultural foods from their fields without having to exchange something for such food with the Massango. Hunting, gathering, and fishing in the forest also provide protein and fat intakes. The Babongo usually go hunting, gathering and fishing for a day, but sometimes stay overnight at forest camps for these activities. Camping is carried out by groups of 1-4 families averaging 9.1 persons for a short period of 1-7 days, averaging 3.2 days (Matsuura, 2006).

The Babongo have adopted the matrilineal and patrilocal social system of the Massango and share a language, clanship, and other rituals of Massango origin (Matsuura, 2006; 2007). Since the Babongo and Massango both have a matrilineal social system, I regarded the children of intermarriage as belonging to the mother's ethnic group.⁽²⁾

The research village is Boutoumbi, located along the roadside approximately 50 km to the east of the departmental capital, Mimongo. Because the Boutoumbi inhabitants usually communicate with the people of the closest and the next closest villages along the road, I call all these four villages the "neighboring villages." Although there are 100-200 inhabitants composed of both the Babongo and Massango in the neighboring villages, Boutoumbi Village is composed only of the Babongo and has a small population of about 30 inhabitants (Table.1).

According to my interviews, Boutoumbi Village had been composed of both the Babongo and Massango, but then was integrated to the adjacent village, Moukandi by the Gabonese regroupment policy in the 1960s. When there were conflicts among the Babongo in Moukandi Village, those Babongo originally

Table 1. Reseach villages in Gabon

Village name	Distance from Boutoumbi (km)	Resident composition	Population*	
			Babongo	Massango
Diyanga	19	Babongo, Massango	70	100
Dibamba	10	Babongo, Massango	50	50
Boutoumbi	-	Babongo only	30	-
Moukandi	5	Babongo, Massango	100	100
Mounongo	11	Babongo, Massango	?	?
Total			250+	250+

*Estimated from the electoral list and number of houses.

from Boutoumbi Village returned to their former village. As a result, Boutoumbi has become a unique village that has a small population. From then on, the village is composed only of the Babongo. Because of its small population and composition, Boutoumbi Village is convenient for me to compare with the Baka I describe below who live in small-sized settlements independently from their neighboring farmers. Although Boutoumbi Village may be unique in terms of the population and composition, the Babongo in Boutoumbi Village do not differ from those of any other Babongo in lifestyle, use of natural resources, and the skill in traditional healing practices.⁽³⁾

II. The Baka

I conducted field research on the Baka Pygmies at Koumela Village in Département de Boumba-et-Ngoko, Province de l'Est in southeastern Cameroon (Fig.2) for two months during the rainy season (March to May 2005). Koumela is located on the road between the departmental capital, Yokadouma, and the sub-prefectural capital, Moloundou, and composed of 16 residential clusters along the road at intervals of 0.1-1km. I call the residential clusters constituting a village, "settlements." The population of one settlement is 20-250 persons. There are two ethnic groups, the Baka and their neighboring farmers, Bangando.

The Baka and the Bangando live separately, and none of the Baka lives in Bangando settlements other than the women who married Bangando men. Baka settlements are easily distinguished from the Bangando ones because they are small-sized and contain traditional semi-spherical, leaf-and-twig huts. Some Baka in this region spend 50% of their days at the village and remaining 20-50% of their days at the camps (Hattori, 2008; Yasuoka, 2006). They sometimes go on foraging expeditions for more than two months at a time in groups composed of most of the members in one settlement (Yasuoka, 2006). In Koumela Village, I observed that some Baka spent about four weeks at the farming camp, but many Baka stayed in their settlements most of the time. There were some Baka, especially young men in their twenties and thirties, who were absent during my entire research period, because they were away working in the base camps of foreign sports hunting companies or logging companies.

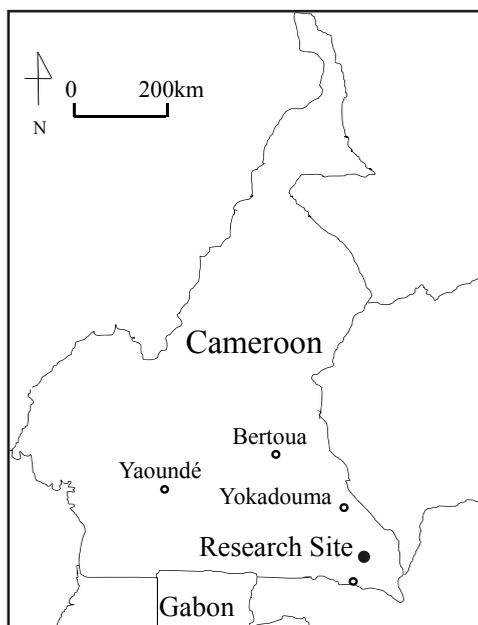


Fig. 2. Research site in Cameroon

Table 2. Research settlements in Cameroon

No.*	Settlement name	Distance from Koumela centre (km)	Population**	
			Baka	Bangandou
BK1	Dissassui	5	151	-
BG1	Sékopana	4.5	3	50
BK2	(next to Bélinguèngui)	3.5	19	-
BG2	Bélinguèngui	3	-	50
BK3	Paka	2.8	31	-
BG3	(No name)	2.5	-	20
BK4	Sépa	2	79	-
BK5	(next to Koumela centre)	0.2	21	-
BG4	Koumela centre	-	-	250
BK6	Soukambo	1	29	-
BK7	Vétééné	1.1	19	-
BK8	Sawi	2	35	-
BK9	Milieu	2.2	24	-
BG5	Mboli	2.5	-	50
BK10	Mbanda	3	34	-
BK11	Bonbola	4	28	-
Total			473	420

*BK: Baka settlements, BG: Bangando settlements.

**Baka population interviewed, and Bangando population estimated from the number of houses.

The Baka use their original language among themselves while they communicate with the Bangando in the Bangando language. The Baka frequently work for the Bangando in return for money, alcoholic drinks, cloths, and other goods (Matsuura, 2006). Since both the Baka and the Bangando have a patrilineal social system, I regarded the children of intermarriage as belonging to the father's ethnic group. The location and population of the research settlements are shown in Table 2.

METHODS

I. Visiting Activities

I defined visitors as the people who do not have houses⁽⁴⁾ in my research village or settlement.⁽⁵⁾

There are two types of visiting activities: visiting for the day, and visiting to stay more than one day. Because the villages are located along the roadside, many people pass through even if they do not intend to visit. Therefore, I focus only on visits to stay more than one day in this article.⁽⁶⁾ I observed the visiting activities, and recorded visitor composition including children. Visitors were classified into age-classes: age 3-10 as "child," 10-20 as "adolescent," and over 20 as "adult." Married persons under 20 years of age were included in the "adult" age-class. I distinguished the visitors who have parents or children in the village where they visited from other visitors, as "family visitors" here. If spouses and/or children accompanied the "family visitors," I classified them also as "family visitors."

I interviewed the visitors about the purpose of their visit. In Gabon, I collected samples of the visiting activities in Boutoumbi in the following three periods, 223 days in total: (1) 83 days (1 August to 22 October 2003), (2) 69 days (1 December 2004 to 11 February 2005, excluding 18 to 21 December 2004),⁽⁷⁾ and (3) 71 days (26 May to 4 August 2005). In cases that I was absent from Boutoumbi, away in town or forest camps during these periods, I later asked the Boutoumbi inhabitants whether there were visitors during my absence.

I collected samples of the visiting activities in six Baka settlements (Table 2: BK6-BK11) in Koumela Village for 40 days from 30 March to 8 May 2005.

II. Personal Experiences of Trips

I interviewed the Babongo and Baka adults about their personal experiences of trips. For comparison, I also interviewed the Massango and Bangando adults. In the interview, I quoted several major towns and asked whether the interviewees had ever been there. If they had, I inquired the purpose, visitor composition, and length of time. The number of people interviewed is shown in Table 3. The Babongo, Massango and Baka samples are not biased, but the Bangando

Table 3. Personal experiences of trips by ethnicity and sex

Country	Ethnic Group	Male	Female	Total
Gabon	Babongo	13	15	28
	Massango	20	19	39
Cameroon	Baka	47	55	102
	Bangando	7	1	8

samples are small, and biased to male samples.

I asked the Babongo and the Massango in Gabon whether they had ever visited the following towns (see Fig. 1): Mimongo, the departmental capital located approximately 50km from Boutoumbi, Mouila, the provincial capital 150km from Boutoumbi, and Libreville, the Gabonese capital 450km from Boutoumbi. I also asked the Baka and Bangando in Cameroon about the following towns (see Fig. 2): Moloundou, the sub-prefectural capital located approximately 60km from Koumela, Yokadouma, the departmental capital located 150km from Koumela, and Bertoua, the provincial capital located 450km from Koumela. I classified the personal experiences of trips into three categories: visited more than three times, visited once to three times, and never visited. I classified the examples of “visited less than three times but stayed for more than one month” as “having visited more than three times” because of the long length of the stay.

RESULTS

I. Visiting Activities

1. Visitors to the Babongo village

I observed 136 visitors (63 males and 73 females) in Boutoumbi during three periods for 223 days in total. The visitors were composed of 79 Babongo (31 males and 48 females), 44 Massango (26 males and 18 females) and 13 people of other ethnic groups (6 males and 7 females). I did not observe visits by children by themselves or by a group of children with no accompanying adolescent or adult. The number and sex composition of visitors of each age-class is shown in Table 4-1. There were 55 “family visitors” and 88 “other visitors.” The composition of “family” and “other” visitors is shown in Table 4-2.

(1) Family visitors

Sixty-one percent of Babongo visitors (48/79), 16% of Massango visitors (7/44), and 40% of total visitors (55/136) were family visitors (Table 4-2). There was a significant difference in the sex composition between the Babongo visitors (12 males vs. 36 females) and the Massango visitors (6 males vs. 1 female) ($p < 0.01$, Fisher’s exact test). Because some women who married out from Boutoumbi Village were included, there were more females than males among the Babongo. Twelve out of 36 female Babongo visitors were of Boutoumbi origin in their

Table 4-1. Number and sex composition of visitors to Boutoumbi by age-class

	Babongo			Massango		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Adult [%]	18 [58]	34 [70]	52 [66]	21 [81]	17 [94]	38 [86]
Adolescent [%]	5 [16]	7 [15]	12 [15]	2 [8]	1 [6]	3 [7]
Child [%]	8 [26]	7 [15]	15 [19]	3 [11]	0 [0]	3 [7]
Total	31 [100]	48 [100]	79 [100]	26 [100]	18 [100]	44 [100]

	Others		
	Male	Female	Total
Adult [%]	5 [83]	7 [0]	12 [92]
Adolescent [%]	1 [17]	0 [0]	1 [8]
Child [%]	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]
Total	6 [100]	7 [100]	13 [100]

Table 4-2. Number and sex composition of “family” visitors and “other” visitors to Babongo village

	Babongo			Massango		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Family [%]	12 [39]	36 [75]	48 [61]	6 [23]	1 [6]	7 [16]
Other [%]	19 [61]	12 [25]	31 [39]	20 [77]	17 [94]	37 [84]
Total [%]	31 [100]	48 [100]	79 [100]	26 [100]	18 [100]	44 [100]

	Others		
	Male	Female	Total
Family [%]	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]
Other [%]	6 [100]	7 [100]	13 [100]
Total [%]	6 [100]	7 [100]	13 [100]

teens to the thirties visiting their parents. Three female Babongo visitors were old widows living with their children or affines in other villages visiting their daughters who had married out. On the other hand, there were many more visiting male than female Massango, because some Massango men with Babongo wives from Boutoumbi Village sometimes accompanied their wives' visits. I give an example of a woman who has married out to the neighboring village, Moukandi in April 2005. During the 69 days from June to August 2005, she spent 20 days (including 12 days with her Massango husband) in Boutoumbi Village. This couple was also in a forest camp for ten days with the wife's relatives. I counted six cases where a Babongo wife and a Massango husband visited Boutoumbi Village, with two of the couples from a town called Mimongo. I identified marriages of eleven Babongo women in their twenties and thirties of Boutoumbi origin. Three out of these eleven women including two women above married out to town.

The women who had married out often brought their children on their visits. Some women visited with their husbands and children, whereas others visited only with their children, because their husbands were away for wage labor. Ten out of all 18 children visitors (Table 4-1) had mothers of Boutoumbi origin. In particular, seven Babongo children had Massango fathers and Babongo mothers of Boutoumbi origin. Although the children came with their mothers to Boutoumbi, they did not always stay over together. During their mothers' absence, the children were taken care of by their grandparents, uncles or aunts on the mother's side. Therefore, children tended to stay in Boutoumbi Village relatively longer than their mothers. The mean length of stay was 81.9 days for the children, and 55.3 days for their mothers. In summary, (1) women who had married out keep intimate relationships with the relatives after their marriage, (2) men visit their affines with their wives and establish new relationships, and (3) children are taken care of by their maternal relatives and form close bonds with them. Not only the Babongo but also Massango husbands visited and established relationships with their Babongo affines.

The mean length of stay of all family visitors (55 persons) was 40.8 days. The proportion of family visitors who came to Boutoumbi in all three research period was 24% (13 persons), in two periods 24% (13 persons), and in one period 52% (29 persons). Nearly half of family visitors came to Boutoumbi Village in different research periods. Forty-four percent of the family visitors (24 persons) stayed in Boutoumbi Village for a longer time than in their own village in at least one research period. When these visitors were in Boutoumbi Village, they worked in the field, cooked, and washed with their family.

(2) Other visitors

Sixty percent (81/136) of visitors were classified as "other visitors," comprising 31% of Babongo visitors (31/79), 84% (37/44) of Massango visitors, and 100% (13/13) of visitors of other ethnic groups (Table 4-2). Although these visitors had many purposes for the visits,⁽⁸⁾ I classified them according to the main purpose into four categories as follows: business, subsistence activities, rituals, and others. I examined the proportion of each category in Fig. 3, and describe the characteristics of visitors in the following section.

i) Business

There were some visitors who sought to enlist work from Boutoumbi inhabitants such as gun hunting, plant gathering, traditional healing, and traditional dance, in exchange for money or manufactured goods. All visitors of other ethnic groups (13/13) and 41% (15/37) of "other visitors" of Massango were on business. I demonstrated all examples of business visits in Table 5-1. Business visits for the day from June to August 2005 are also shown in Table 5-2.

Visitors for business purposes usually came in groups of 2-4 persons (avg. 2.4 persons) mainly composed of adults. Length of stay was 4.6 days on average and ten days maximum. Most of them came from town on private car or commercial transport. They were from the departmental capital, Mimongo, the pro-

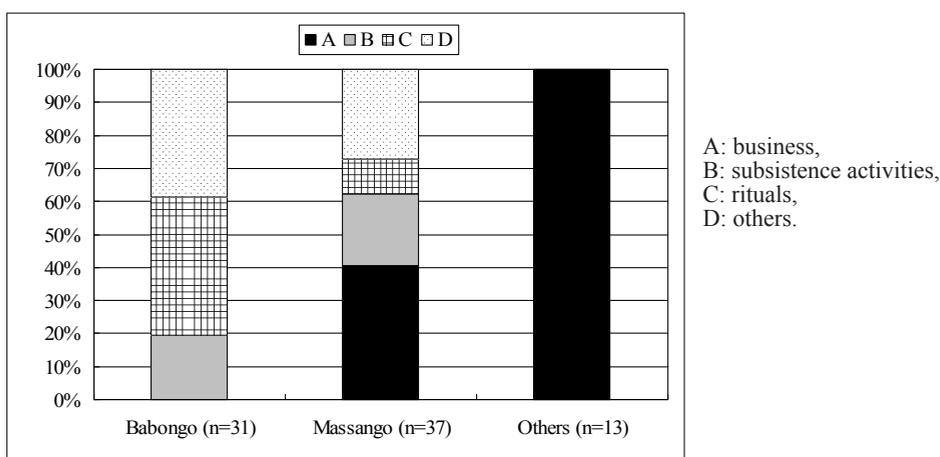


Fig. 3. Babongo and Massango visits and their purposes

Table 5-1. Business visits to Boutoumbi

No.	Period	Length of stay (days)	No. of visitors (male, female)		Ethnic group	Where the visitor came from	Business purpose
			adults	non-adults			
1	14-23 Aug. 2003	10	(0, 2)	(1, 0)	other (unknown)	town (Port-Gentil)	traditional healing
2	25-27 Aug. 2003	3	(1, 0)	0	Massango	town (Mimongo)	gun hunting
3	12-13 Sep. 2003	2	(1, 1)	(0, 1)	Massango	town (Mimongo)	traditional healing
4	11-19 Dec. 2004	10	(1, 2)	0	other (Punu)	town (Libreville)	traditional healing
5	4-5 Jan. 2005	2	(3, 0)	0	Massango	town (Libreville)	traditional healing
6	4-7 Feb. 2005	4	(2, 2)	0	Massango	town (Mimongo)	medical plants
7	4-8 Jun. 2005	5	(0, 1)*	0	Massango	village (Ndjolé)	traditional healing
8	11-17 Jun. 2005	6	(1, 0)	0	other (Fang)	town (Libreville)	traditional healing
9**	24-25 Jun. 2005	2	(1, 1)	0	Massango	town (Mimongo)	medical plants
10	28 Jun.-5 Jul.	8	(1, 1)	0	other (Vili)	town (Gamba)	traditional healing
11	3-4 Jul. 2005	2	(1, 2)***	(0, 1)	Massango	village (Mounongo)	traditional healing
12	24 Jul. 2005	1	(0, 2)	0	Massango	town (Libreville)	traditional healing
mean		4.6	2.4				

*Accompanied by a Babongo woman who has relatives in Boutoumbi.

** Visitor group No.6 had 2 members the same as group No.9.

*** Accompanied by a Babongo couple that have relatives in Boutoumbi.

Table 5-2. Examples of business visits to Boutoumbi (daytrips)

No.	Date	No. of visitors*	Ethnic group	Where the visitor came	Purpose
13	3 Jun. 2005	1	other (unknown)	town (Mouila)	gathering plants
14	3 Jun. 2005	3	Massango	town (Mimongo)	gun hunting
15	9 Jun. 2005	4	other (Nzébi)	town (Mouila)	traditional healing
16**	13 Jun. 2005	3	Massango	town (Mimongo)	gun hunting
17	7 Jul. 2005	2	Massango	town (Koulamoutou)	traditional healing

*All visitors are adult males.

**Visitor group No.14 had the same members as group No.16.

vincial capital, Mouila, and even from the Gabonese capital, Libreville. There were two cases where Massango visitors from neighboring villages (No. 7, No. 11) came on foot. They came with their Babongo friends who have relatives in Boutoumbi Villages.

Some visitors came repeatedly, and kept intimate relationships with the Boutoumbi inhabitants. Massango visitors No. 7 and No. 11 had kept ties with the Boutoumbi people for a long time. A female official of a local government and her associates (No. 6, No. 9) and a male shop manager and his associates (No. 14, No. 16) visited Boutoumbi Village twice during my research periods. They all said that they had long been acquaintances with the Boutoumbi inhabitants, and visited time after time. Although I observed them only once in my research periods, visitors No. 7 and No. 13 also said they visited regularly. Visitor No. 17 was sent to the village by the Finance Minister from this region who knew very well about the Boutoumbi inhabitants. Some visitors were able to establish new relationships with the Boutoumbi villagers through their visits. Visitor No. 10 promised to come again for another session of the traditional healing practice upon leaving Boutoumbi Village.

While visitors depended on the Babongo for their vast knowledge of natural resources and special skills in traditional healing practices, the Babongo also depended on visitors. They sometimes asked visitors for a ride to the shops or hospitals in town. Because some Babongo are especially skilled hunters, gatherers, and healers, it seems that the Babongo are regarded as people with special knowledge that other people do not have. And the Babongo embraced the importance of establishing close and continuous relationships with the people in town as well.

ii) Subsistence activities

Some people in neighboring villages own fields near Boutoumbi Village. In order to concentrate on farming, they stayed in Boutoumbi during the planting season. There were also some people who visited Boutoumbi Village for hunting and gathering in the forest camps with the Babongo. Among "other visitors," 19% (6/31) of the Babongo visitors and 22% (8/37) of the Massango visitors came to Boutoumbi Village for subsistence activities. Characteristics of these visitors were: (1) they visited with their family, and (2) they visited seasonally.

Here are some examples of visitors that I observed:

- a Babongo man in his forties who has an older sister in Boutoumbi Village, his wife, and their children visited from Moukandi.
- a Babongo man in his fifties who has a younger brother in Boutoumbi Village and his son in his twenties visited from Moukandi.
- a Massango couple in their sixties visited from Dibamba.
- a Massango woman in her forties and her daughter in her twenties visited from Moukandi.

The Babongo tended to visit in July (dry season) when the weather is suit-

able for traveling to hunting camps, and the Massango visited in December during the planting season. These visitors did not stay for successive days but went back and forth to their villages several times. They stayed for a few days to one month in total. In spite of the fact that visitors can come and return in a day because of the proximity of the neighboring villages, 1-2 hours on foot, they stayed for several days at Boutoumbi Village. The Babongo visitors had relatives in Boutoumbi Village, and were familiar with other Boutoumbi inhabitants. The Massango visitors also said that they had intimate and cooperative relationships with the Boutoumbi inhabitants for a long time.

iii) Rituals

Rituals are important social events at the research site. In particular, funerals are held frequently, because there are a series of funerals for one deceased at intervals of a few years. When a ritual was held, many visiting activities were observed. Forty-two percent (13/31) of “other visitors” of the Babongo, and 11% (4/37) of “other visitors” of the Massango, came to Boutoumbi Village for rituals. Some of them came to participate in the ritual held in Boutoumbi Village, and others came before or after a ritual in the neighboring villages. Characteristics of these visitors were: (1) they did not visit Boutoumbi Village for any other reason, and (2) they stayed for quite a short period. The mean days of stay were 2.2 days. These visitors were socially distant from the Boutoumbi inhabitants in spite of living in the neighboring villages. Not only the relatives or villagers of the same village as the ritual organizer but anyone belonging to the same ritual associations can participate in the rituals. In a previous article, I illustrated the initiation ritual in which more than a hundred people assembled in Boutoumbi Village (Matsuura, 2007). The rituals are events when the visitors and the villagers meet unfamiliar people and establish new social relationships.

iv) Others

Some people visited Boutoumbi Village only to see friends and/or relatives other than parents or children. I included them in this category.

2. Visiting Activities by the Babongo

Since I have already described the visiting activities by the Babongo in Boutoumbi Village in detail in a previous article (Matsuura, 2006), I give only an outline here. In many cases, the Babongo visit the neighboring villages to see their relatives and affines, including both Babongo and Massango, or to participate in rituals. They visit in groups of 1-3 member(s) to see their relatives and affines, while many people travel together (avg. 12.4 persons) to participate in rituals in the neighboring villages. In some ritual occasions, most of the Boutoumbi villagers went together. They stayed in their destinations for a short period (1-6 days) in both cases. The Babongo in Boutoumbi Village also visited the towns. As I mentioned above, they went to shops and hospitals in town such as the department capital, Mimongo. They went by car with their acquaintances or in vehicles that happened to pass by. In addition, they were sometimes brought into town for rituals and ceremonies organized by the govern-

ment or prominent personages.

Characteristics of the visiting activities by the Babongo from Boutoumbi Village are correlated with those of visitors to Boutoumbi Village. Namely, there are mutual visits to see their relatives and/or affines, and to participate in rituals between Boutoumbi Village and the neighboring villages. People from town visit Boutoumbi Village to enlist hunting-gathering members and traditional healing practitioners, while Boutoumbi villagers visit the towns to obtain manufactured goods and modern medicines, with rides requested from acquaintances or passing vehicles.

3. Visitors to Baka Settlements and Visiting Activities by the Baka

All visitors who stayed more than a day at the six Baka settlements (Table 2: BK6-BK11) were Baka (Table 6). Since there were no Bangando visitors during the 40 days in my research period, it could be said that the Bangando did not visit the Baka settlements to stay for more than a day. This is partly because the Bangando settlements are located quite near the Baka settlements. However, it is not only a matter of distance. Some Bangando said that they would never stay overnight at the Baka settlements. Even if they stopped in the Baka settlements to enlist labor, they went away soon after the negotiation. I observed a case where several Bangando visitors came to a Baka settlement for a singing and dancing ceremony. Although it lasted until the next morning, all of the Bangando returned to their settlements when the night came. On the other hand, when the Bangando came to visit from other regions, all stayed at the Bangando settlements. In addition to the residential separation of the two, the Bangando and the Baka are clearly distinguishable in terms of the characteristics of their visiting activities.

As for the Baka visitors, there were more females than males among adult visitors while there were no significant differences in the sex composition among children and adolescents. This is because couples rarely visited together. Most visitors were women who had married out whose husbands were working away from home or had already died. The proportion of “family visitors” was 73% (27/37). The mean length of stay of all visitors was 19.5 days, which accounts for nearly half of my research period (40 days). Twenty-two percent (8/37) of visitors stayed for the entire duration of my research period.

Table 6. Number, age-class and sex composition of visitors to six Baka settlements

Sex		Male [%]	Female [%]
Age-class	Adult	8 [53]	16 [73]
	Adolescent	4 [27]	4 [18]
	Child	3 [20]	2 [9]
Total		15 [100]	22 [100]

All visitors are Baka. They all visited and stayed in only one settlement, except for one female who visited two settlements during the research period.

Table 7. Visits to sports hunting and logging base camps by the Baka

Settlement	Soukambo	Véténé	Sawi	Milieu	Mbanda	Bonbola	Total
No. of visitors	12 [41.4%]	4 [21.1%]	10 [28.6%]	13 [54.2%]	12 [35.3%]	6 [21.4%]	57
Mean length of stay (days)*	23.5	29.3	21.6	28.2	19	25.2	23.9

[]: proportion of visitors to the total population.

*Total research period is 40 days.

I also examined the visiting activities by the Baka in six settlements. In addition to the neighboring settlements, they tended to visit base camps of foreign sports hunting companies or logging companies near Koumela Village (Table 7). There were two patterns: (1) visitors themselves worked for the companies and (2) visitors went to see their relatives who did. More than one fifth to a half of the residents in each settlement visited these base camps. The mean length of stay was 23.9 days, which was longer than half of my research period. As I mentioned, there are some Baka, especially young men in their twenties and thirties who were away in base camps during my entire research period.

In this region, the base camps of hunting and logging companies are quite important to visit, because they are rather close to the village and provide opportunities for employment. Unlike the Babongo, visiting activities to towns such as Moloundou and Yokadouma were not observed among the Baka.

Although I focused on visits that were longer than one day, I will add examples of visits for the day. The Baka visited the Bangando settlements frequently to look for small jobs in farming or housework. When there were opportunities, the Baka worked for about half a day to obtain crops, alcohol, and small change. The wages were 250 CFA francs, which can buy 0.5 liters of local spirit or 10 cigarettes, per day. They spent more than 10% of total hours for economic activities on small jobs.

II. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF TRIPS

My study of the visiting activities found that the Babongo established mutual and close relationships with people in towns, while the Baka did not. In order to verify this, I examined the personal experiences of trips. In Fig. 4, the Babongo had experienced more visits to town than the Baka had, slightly less than that of the Massango. Even considering the bias among the samples for the Bangando, the difference between the Babongo and Massango is less than that found between the Baka and Bangando. It may be because the Babongo have many relatives and acquaintances in towns. The Babongo have much more opportunities to visit towns in that sense, to see their relatives who are married there. They can also ask acquaintances who visit their village from towns to take them back into town. Since there are fewer cars that pass by my research site in Gabon, it is more difficult to move about in Gabon than in Cameroon in terms of traffic convenience. Despite this, the Babongo have had many opportunities to visit the towns because of the social networks established by

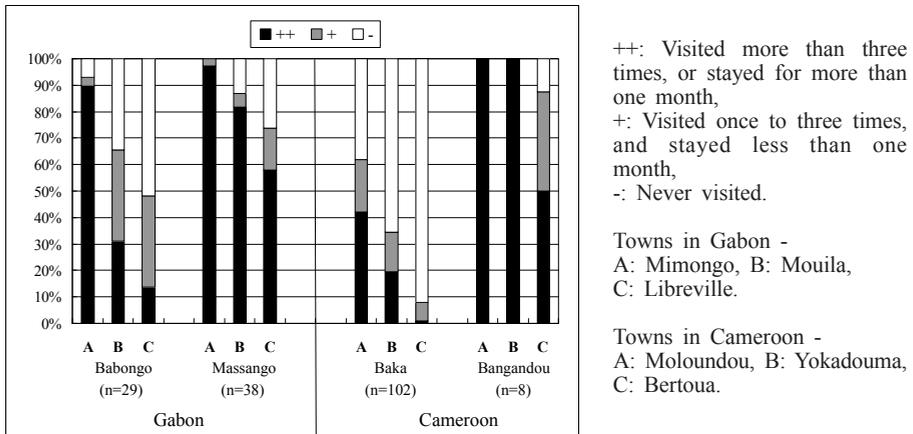


Fig. 4. Experience of visits to town

Table 8. Experiences and purposes of visits to the capital

Ethnic group	Babongo	Baka
Proportion of persons who experienced visits to the capital	50% (14/28)	4% (4/102)
No. of visits (person-trips)	36	4
Purposes for the visit (person-trip(s))	dance ceremony (16) to see family and friends (7) traditional healing (3) unknown (10)	wage labor (3) football match (1)

marriage and mutual visits.

In addition, opportunities to visit the towns are sometimes given to the Babongo in conjunction to national events or prominent personages. I went to Mouila with four Boutoumbi couples on August 17th, the Gabonese Independence Day, in 2003. We went on a government-hired car and stayed in a school arranged by the government as lodging for the occasion. After demonstrating their traditional dance at a parade, they stayed on for four days and were driven back to the village.⁽⁹⁾

Certainly, the Babongo also have occasions such as above and many other opportunities to visit the capital (Table 8). Half (14/28) of the Babongo informants had visited Libreville (36 person-trips). They visited for the purpose of participating in dance ceremonies (16 person-trips, three cases) and traditional healing practice sessions requested by the Finance Minister (3 person-trips, one case). They were sometimes brought into town by their relatives or acquaintances (7 person-trips). One Babongo woman had stayed in Libreville for several months in her youth. In contrast, only 4% (4/102) of the Baka informants

had ever been to the Cameroonian capital, Yaoundé (4 person-trips). They visited for the purpose of working (3 person-trips, three cases) and to play in a football match organized by a prominent personage (1 person-trip).

DISCUSSION

I analyzed the visiting activities and personal experiences of trips among two highly sedentarized groups of the Babongo and the Baka Pygmies. I compared the characteristics of their visiting patterns, and describe here the differences I found between them.

The common characteristic of the movement patterns between the Babongo and Baka is the importance of its social aspect. In both societies, visitors were composed mainly of family members who came repeatedly and stayed relatively long. According to a study on the Aka Pygmies around 1980 who had not much sedentarized, 40% of the purposes of trips made by the Aka were to visit relatives (Hewlett et al., 1982). The proportion of “family visitors” among the Babongo visitors (61%) and the Baka visitors (74%) is larger than that of the Aka visitors. Even among “other visitors,” there were some people who have relatives in my research villages. In addition, many visitors who do not have relatives in my research villages visited for the purpose of participating in social events such as rituals. For example, more than 40% of “other visitors” of the Babongo visited to participate in rituals, while 19% visited to engage in subsistence activities. When the Pygmy residence becomes fixed, and food resources are neither dispersed nor fluctuating, socially motivated visits have become more important than the ecologically motivated ones.

There are significant differences in the visiting patterns between the Babongo and Baka Pygmies such as visits by the neighboring farmers. Although the Bangando farmers sometimes stopped at Baka settlements to enlist labor, they went away immediately afterwards, while no Bangando farmer passed the night in Baka settlements. This was in great contrast to the Massango farmers who stayed in the Babongo village frequently. The Pygmies’ relation with the people in town is also different between the Babongo and Baka. There were some visitors to the Babongo village from the towns, while no one from a town came to the Baka settlements.

I suppose that it has become much easier to visit the neighboring villages and town for both the Babongo and Baka, due to sedentarization. In the Baka society, this tendency is seen in the visits to farmer settlements to work for the day or to the base camps of foreign sports hunting companies or logging companies near the village to look for longer employment. For the neighboring farmers and managers of these base camps, the Baka are available as a labor force for low wages or a few gifts.

According to the study of the Baka with a relatively nomadic lifestyle, the nomadic Baka used to live separately and independently from the farmers, because they practiced agriculture by themselves and could obtain much forest

products by hunting and gathering (Yasuoka, 2006). On the other hand, Hattori (2008) reported that the sedentarized Baka have become more dependent on farmers. She found that 94% of agricultural products and 62% of cash income of the Baka were obtained from trading with the farmers or day labor for them (Hattori, 2008). Because of such economic and political dependence, these Baka are socially discriminated against by the farmers (Hattori, 2008). Rupp (2003), who studied a village near my research site in Cameroon, emphasized the intimate aspect of interethnic relationships between the Baka and Bangando based on fictive kinships and/or friendships. However, she also pointed out the asymmetry in social power between them. It is usually the Baka who visit and provide labor for the Bangando. After work, they return to their settlements on the same day. The situation is similar to the cases at my research site.

As I showed above, wage labor in base camps of foreign sports hunting companies or logging companies is important for the Baka in my research site. Many Baka visited these base camps to work or to see their relatives working there. However, I suppose that the Baka cannot live on wage labor, because the wages are small and opportunities for labor are limited. The wages earned by the Baka are the cheapest among all laborers (Kitanishi, 2006). I have heard that the Baka complained about their small income and the difficult nature of their work upon returning to their village. Hattori (2008) also reported a case where a Baka felt antipathy against the Turkish manager of the sports hunting company because he had a menacing attitude. The Baka still have a lower social and economic status.

There are some Baka who keep partial economic autonomy from the farmers because they cultivate their own fields, the importance of cacao and coffee field labor has increased, and the logging companies have advanced further into the region (Kitanishi, 2006). Even among the cultivating Baka, it is also true that they experience disadvantages in their economic transactions, because they are peripheral in the market economy and the nation state (Kitanishi, 2006).

In contrast to the Baka, the Babongo visited the Massango in the neighboring villages and stayed there for several days. They also had more experiences visiting the towns than the Baka did. Since it takes more than a day to the towns and car transport is needed, it is difficult to go into town without any relatives or acquaintances there. As shown above, the Babongo women sometimes married the Massango in town. The Babongo relatives of these women are able to visit and stay in their house in town. The Massango and people of other ethnic groups from towns visited Babongo inhabitants, especially for business purposes. They helped the Babongo to visit the towns. Social networks including the neighboring farmers and townspeople have gradually extended into the Babongo society, because of intermarriage and mutual visits.

As I mentioned above, the sedentarization of the Pygmies was mostly due to the sedentary policies of the government, infiltration of monetary economies, and construction of the roads. Many previous studies demonstrated that the discrimination against the Pygmies by the farmers has not been unusual in the process of the Pygmies' participation in the nation state after their sedentariza-

tion (Kenrick, 2005; Lewis, 2005). This was also seen in the sedentary Baka societies that I studied. However, the Babongo Pygmies have established another type of interethnic relationship with the neighboring farmers despite the similar sedentarization process in Gabon (Knight, 2003; Matsuura, 2006). What makes their situations different? I have pointed out the political, economic and social factors in a previous article (Matsuura, 2006). Based on the results of the observation of the visiting patterns, I augment this issue.

There were some political and economic personages such as a minister and a shop manager who were familiar with the Babongo. They depended on the Babongo knowledge of natural resources and skill in the traditional healing practices. These people sometimes visited the Babongo village to enlist their skills. There were also some cases where the Babongo were taken into town to conduct healing practices. In addition, national political events worked to make some Babongo's visits into town possible, when the Babongo were invited to demonstrate their traditional dance at events such as at the independence ceremony.

It is unclear whether all of the Babongo in Gabon can obtain such social status through their knowledge and skill. However, some notable Gabonese people have solicited the Pygmy's knowledge on magic and divination in resolving their societal contradictions. Ngolet (2000) pointed out that the former Gabonese president who has died in June 2009, Omar Bongo, a member of the Batéké ethnic group perceived by the populace as being Pygmies, established his political domination owing to the Pygmy perception of mystical individual, a man capable of seeing the invisible and detecting the undetectable, in other words, a providential being. It is said that the Gabonese political situation may influence the social status of the Babongo.

It is also possible that the economic situation at my research site located in the mountainous hinterland is also related. The population density around Boutoumbi Village in Gabon (21 persons per kilometer road between Diyanga and Moukandi) is lower than that of Koumela Village in Cameroon (100 persons per kilometer from Dissassui to Bonbola). Forest exploitation by a foreign company is not so extensive around Boutoumbi Village in Gabon, while there are many base camps of logging companies and sports hunting companies around Koumela Village in Cameroon. In the present study, I have shown that the Babongo of Boutoumbi Village did not visit the base camps of foreign companies⁽¹⁰⁾ while the Baka of Koumela did so frequently. In such economic circumstances, I assumed that there is less conflict between the economic exploitation and lives of the Babongo in Boutoumbi Village. According to the study on the Bagyeli Pygmies in southwestern Cameroon, a balanced relationship between the Bagyeli and the farmers were established when the Bagyeli were self-sufficient and lived in a small-sized village, while some Bagyeli escaped into the forest, faced with conflict over forest resources and land in a larger village (Van de Sandt, 1999).

In addition to these political and economic factors, the social systems of the Massango farmers contribute to the Babongo-Massango relationship. Because

western Bantu groups in southern Gabon including the Massango have matrilineal and patrilocal social systems, there is a lack of congruence between residence and lineage in their society. Therefore, clan alliance is more important than territoriality in traditional western Bantu societies in Gabon (Gray, 2002; Vansina, 1990). While the primacy of clan allegiance goes beyond the ethnic boundary (Gray, 2002; Mayer, 2002; Vansina, 1990), ethnic categories are less important among them and intermarriages have occurred frequently between different Bantu groups. Paul De Chaillu, a French explorer who traveled in southern Gabon reported that two different Bantu groups were “curiously” intermixed in a village connected by clan alliance and intermarriage (Du Chaillu, 1871; Pourtier, 1989).

On the other hand, one of the characteristics of the Pygmy societies is the fluidity of the membership in residential groups. Because of this membership fluidity, one person rarely holds authority. Although the Babongo have highly sedentarized, they maintain this fluidity and egalitarian aspect of Pygmy society. There is equitable food distribution, mutual help, and collective work in the Babongo societies today. In my observation of the visiting activities flexibility in residence and child care by family members were observed. Some “family visitors,” especially children, stayed for a relatively long span and visited several times.

Where the Massango, with the primacy of clan allegiance beyond ethnic boundary, and the Babongo, with an egalitarian society, came to live together and interact in the same village, it might have been possible to establish relatively equal relationships without much consideration of an ethnic boundary. I have already demonstrated their co-residence, frequent intermarriages, and equally organized ritual practices between the Babongo and the Massango in my previous articles as well (Matsuura, 2006; 2007). Concerning the visiting patterns, I observed that many Massango, including men who married Babongo women, visited the Babongo village with their children, and vice versa.

Analysis of the visiting patterns in this article showed that the social disparity between the Babongo and their neighboring farmers is rather small and that the Babongo have come to participate in the modern social system with little difficulty. However, it is necessary to understand the diversity and complexity of interethnic relationships (Hewlett, 1996; Rupp, 2003; Van de Sandt, 1999). It is difficult to simplify and generalize the interethnic relationship even between the Babongo and Massango as being equals. Intermarriages occur between the Massango male and Babongo female as well as between the Babongo male and Massango female, but the former cases are much more frequent than the latter (Matsuura, 2006). There are more Massango who are administrative chiefs and are wealthy. Although it is unique in the region, Boutoumbi Village, my research site in Gabon, is composed only of the Babongo. This fact indicates itself that there may exist a grave separation of the Babongo from the Massango. If unseen political and/or economic changes happen, it might be possible that the relationship between the Babongo and Massango may also change. Therefore, what I feel to be as important is to understand the Babongo-

Massango relationship on the basis of continuous and detailed research with much consideration to the diversity and complexity in temporal, spatial, and cultural contexts.

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NOTES

- (1) Although there is a controversy about the designation, I chose the well-known term, “Pygmies,” to indicate the several groups of central African hunter-gatherers who share some commonalities to distinguish them from their neighboring farmers. It is now difficult to regard them all as hunter-gatherers, because of the different levels in sedentarization and lifestyle changes as I will describe later.
- (2) However, because the ethnic identity is not simply decided by lineage systems, further discussion is needed for this issue.
- (3) A healer administers medical plants to the patients, and other people assist him in singing all night. There is one healer in Boutoumbi Village, and two in the neighboring villages.
- (4) Baka traditional huts (*mongulu*) are included in the count.
- (5) Children’s houses are defined as the same as their parents.’ There are some old widows who live in the houses left by their late husbands or constructed by their children. Thus the widows’ residences are defined as their late husbands’ or their children’s residences. The men who lived in their wives’ houses for bride services during my research period were regarded as residents in their wives’ villages or settlements.
- (6) There is also a methodological difficulty to record all visits for the day because of the large number of passers-by.
- (7) A male initiation ritual was held in this period, and many participants from the neighboring villages came to Boutoumbi (Matsuura, 2007). Since I participated in the ceremonies as a novice, I could not record the visitors.
- (8) For example, someone visits to see a friend and do some farming during the time a funeral ceremony takes place.
- (9) Because the Gabonese president visits two of the provincial capitals for the Independence Day ceremonies every year, he comes to Mouila every five years. During my fieldwork in 2008, I heard that some Boutoumbi villagers also traveled to Mouila.
- (10) However, there were some Babongo from the neighboring villages of Boutoumbi, who were in the base camps of logging companies several hundred kilometers away from the research site.

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