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著者(ヨミ)	Oishi Takanori
journal or publication title	Senri Ethnological Studies
volume	94
page range	157-175
year	2016-12-08
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.15021/00008294">http://doi.org/10.15021/00008294</a>

## **Aspects of Interactions between Baka Hunter-Gatherers and Migrant Merchants in Southeastern Cameroon**

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### **ABSTRACT**

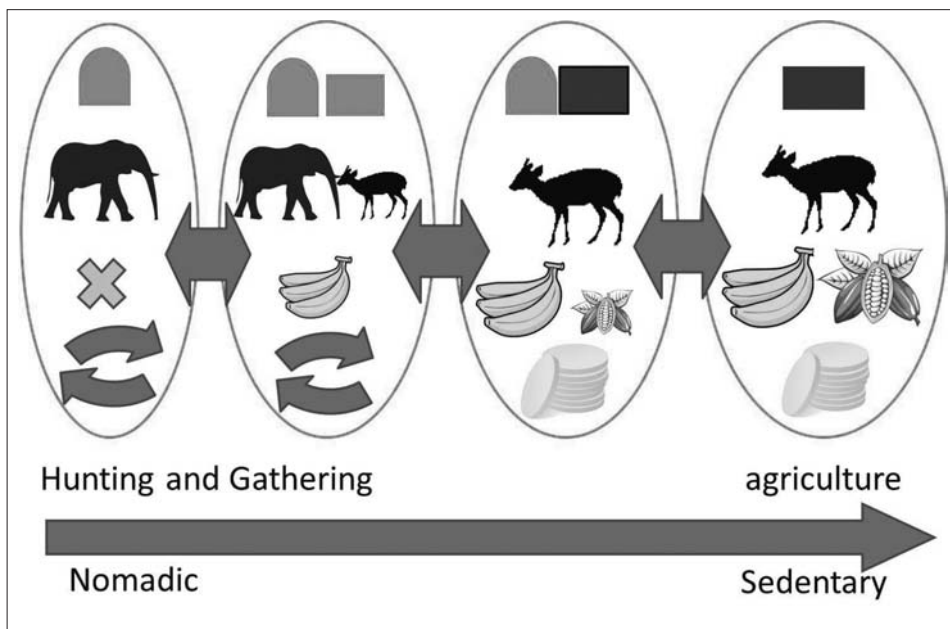
Baka Pygmies and their neighboring farmers have been facing the continuous pressure of the market economy since the 1950s. Following sedentarization and agricultural development, cash began to circulate everywhere, led by the repeated commercial timber logging operations since the 1970s. In addition, cacao farming is widely practiced in the region, including by the Baka. As a perennial tree crop, cacao plantations constitute a new kind of property for the Baka. Cacao cultivation gives them direct access to the market economy without mediation and control by neighboring farmers. This gives the Baka local autonomy. On the other hand, economic inequality is emerging among individual Baka, causing a conflict between self-interest and the traditional egalitarianism. It appears difficult to develop and retain “wealth”, while maintaining the psychosocial principles of egalitarianism. However, many Baka have been developing private cacao plantations for more than three decades. At the same time, some also continue long-term hunting and gathering activities. Hence they are struggling to adapt to the market economy without giving-up the hunting and gathering lifestyle. This paper describes and analyzes new relationships between Baka hunter-gatherers and migrant merchants, who play multiple roles in commoditizing the local economy, and concurrent Baka autonomy from their traditional patrons in neighboring farming society.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Direct contact between the Pygmies of Central Africa and merchants has not been rare. For example, Ichikawa (1991, 2000) analyses the barter exchange of bush meat between the Mbuti and merchants, which has immediate use value. Ichikawa pointed out that barter had long survived together with the cash economy and can serve as a local buffer against fluctuations in the national economy (Ichikawa 1999). Where the barter system is well maintained, independent agricultural production by Pygmies seems little developed.

Gerald Althabe was the first to publish a detailed monograph on social change among the Baka Pygmies of southeastern Cameroon, based on fieldwork conducted in the late 1950s (Althabe 1965). He noted that Baka life had been based on nomadic hunting and gathering until 1950, and made the following points about the impact of food crop adoption on them. First, “Adoption of food-cropping decreased the importance of exchange with their Bantu patrons” (p.569, translation by the author). Second, “Instead of barter exchange with farming patrons, the Pygmies work all-year-around in villager’s plantations to gain cash salary and merchandises” (p.569, translation by the author). Third, “Introduction of agricultural sedentary economy did not only multiply the economic contacts between the Pygmies and the Bantu farmers, but also substituted the exchange system of immediate use value for the exchange of objects of more than immediate use value” (p.569, translation by the author). In the late-1950s, monetarization of economic relationships between the Baka and Bantu farmers had already begun. However, at the same time, Althabe also described variation in the extent of social changes among different Baka communities. His schema shows the variety of house types, frequency and type of hunting activities, adoption of food and cash cropping, and the mode of exchange with Bantu farmers. Althabe positioned each variation in a sequence from nomadic to sedentary lifestyle (Figure 1).

Thus, in the late-1950s the Baka’s relation to Bantu farmers varied between



**Figure 1** Variation of social changes among the Baka communities in southeastern Cameroon (Source: schematized by author from Althabe, 1965)

barter and cash exchanges, and showed interregional variation. In both systems Bantu farmers had retained an intermediary position between the Baka and outside economies. In my previous publication (Oishi 2012), I reported an expansion of cash cropping among the Baka independent of neighboring farmers. Independent cash cropping is observed in only a part of southeastern Cameroon (Oishi 2012) and its adjacent Congo border area (Köhler 2005). Elsewhere, labor offered by the Pygmies to neighboring farmers is common.

Explanation of that regional variation in current independent cash cropping among the Baka is explored in this paper by comparing hunter-gatherer and neighbor relationships in a historical sequence since from the time of Althabe's observation in the late 1950s up to the present. This article also describes aspects of the ongoing process of interethnic relationship transformation, focusing for comparison and discussion on interactions between the Baka and migrant merchants. Rupp criticized reductionism in hunter-gatherer / farmer categorization by examining flexible interrelationships among the Bangando and the Baka (Rupp 2003; 2014). However, her analysis did not contain residential merchants. This paper reconsiders the dynamic transformation of hunter-gatherer and neighbor relationships beyond a bilateral framework of "hunter-gatherer" - "farmer" dichotomy (Rupp 2003). In southeastern Cameroon the continuous pressure of the market economy is commoditizing many goods and relationships. Migrant merchants, most of whom are Moslem, play a role in this process. The article focuses on migrant merchants as a new actor in the hunter-gatherer centered local system, to examine both resilient and challenging aspects of pluralization of hunter-gather relationships with their neighbors.

## THE RESEARCH LOCATION

### 1) Multi-ethnic frontier in the Cameroon-Congo border forest

The research site, Ndongo village, is located along the Dja River, which forms the international border between Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo. Ndongo is located 650km southeast of Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon (Figure 2).

The Ndongo villagers belong to more than 10 ethnic groups, including the Baka, Bakwele, Djem, Bangando, Konabembe, Hausa, Fulbe, Kotoko, and Bamileke. In addition there are inhabitants originated in other West African countries, including Mali, Senegal and Liberia. Ndongo inhabitants can be classified into three categories, based on lifestyle and ethnic identity: the Baka are hunter-gatherers, the Bakwele are farmers, and the Hausa, Bamileke, and Bamoun are merchants. Their respective populations number around 300, 250, and 50 persons, giving a total population of approximately 600 (Oishi 2012). The Bakwele and the Baka have developed pseudo-kinship relationships between lineages, based on the exchange of agricultural foods and forest products, and these relationships have survived to a varied extent until today (Joiris 2003). The Hausa are Moslem immigrants from northern Cameroon and the other West

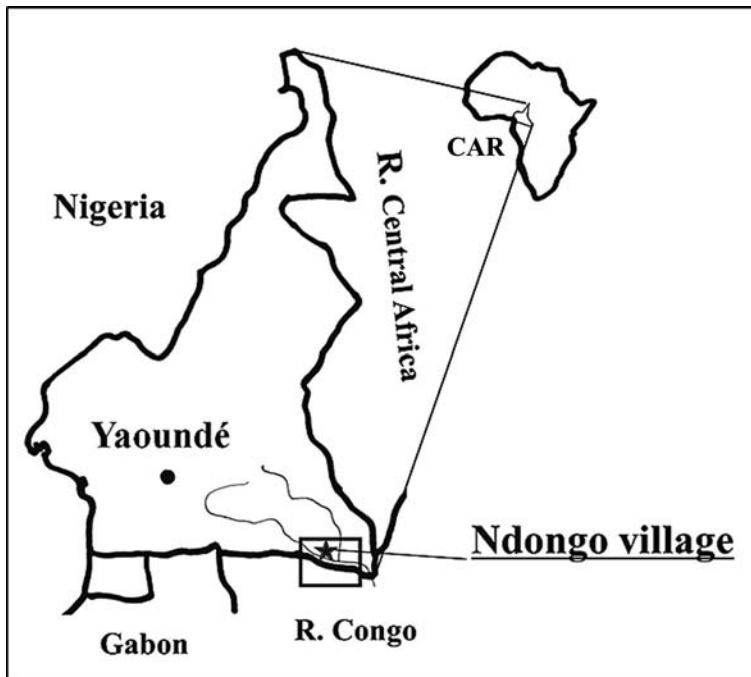


Figure 2 Location of the research area

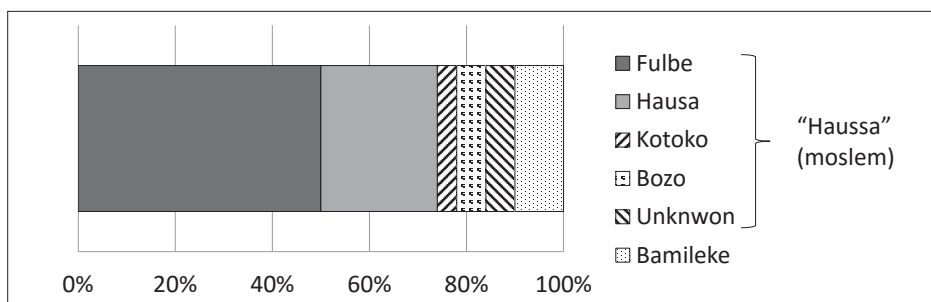
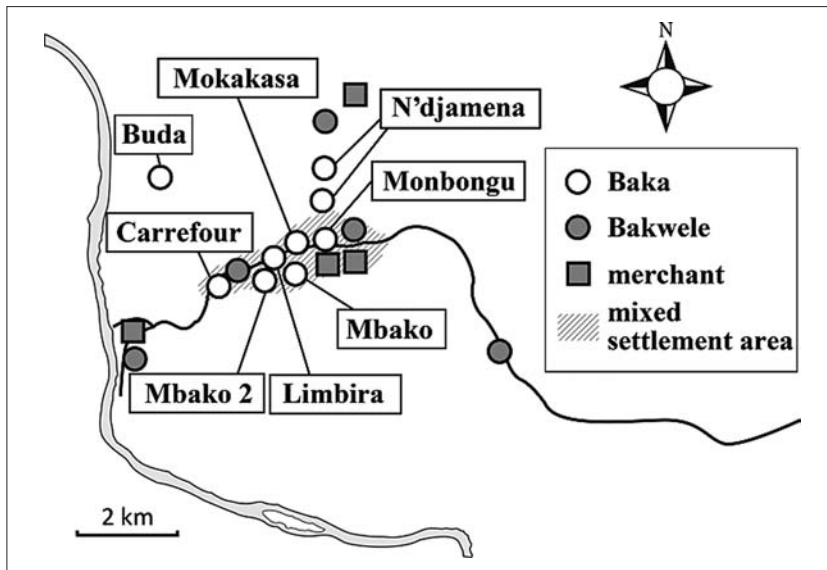


Figure 3 Ethnic composition of residential merchants in the research area (percentage)  
(Source: Oishi 2013)

African countries, such as Nigeria, Senegal and Mali. In addition, non-Moslem cacao traders and merchants, including the Bamileke and Bamoun peoples from western parts of Cameroon, are increasingly found as cacao cultivation and marketing expands in the region (Figure 3).

According to the Baka classification of peoples, these merchants are *mbúnge*<sup>1)</sup>, meaning “strangers”, which is clearly distinct from *káká* for Bantu farmers. Baka contact with *mbúnge* increased as rural economic activities intensified. The two



**Figure 4** Distribution of settlements at the research site  
(Source: Oishi and Hayashi 2014)

Baka settlements, Mokakasa and Monbongu<sup>2</sup>, are located particularly close to the settlements of farmers and merchants (Figure 4).

The primary activities conducted in these settlements by the Baka are shifting cultivation, cacao cultivation, snare trapping, and wage labor (Hayashi 2000; Kitanishi 2003, 2006; Oishi 2012; Oishi and Hayashi 2014). In the minor dry season of 2007, Baka adult males devoted 10.3% (74.4 of 720 observed hours) of their time to their own farm work, and 19.7% (141.9 of 720 observed hours) to wage labor for neighboring farmers and merchants. Baka adult females devoted 8.3% (59.9 of 720 observed hours) to their own farm work and 17.1% (123.3 of 720 observed hours) to wage labor (Hayashi 2010; Oishi and Hayashi 2014). Most Baka possess their own food and cash crops plantations. Between 1998 and 2000 Baka households created plantain fields with an average size of 0.27 (range 0.03–1) ha (Kitanishi 2003). Between 2009 and 2010, 89.2% (58 of 65) of Baka households possessed their own cacao farms with an average size of 0.8 (range 0.1–2.8) ha (Oishi 2012). Although these data indicate the progress of sedentarization, the Baka in the research area also continue a temporary hunting and gathering lifestyle in the forest, especially at the end of the major dry season, between March and April (Hayashi 2000).

Before 1960, the Bakwele and the Baka lived scattered along the upper Dja Basin. The Bakwele formed small villages close to the river banks, whereas the Baka lived in the closed forest. At that time their villages and camps were not mixed. However, in the early-1960s the Government of Cameroon forced them to

relocate and concentrate around their present location (Oishi 2010). There are nine separate and named sedentary camps for the Baka, with population sizes ranging between 27 and 58 persons in March 2009 (Figure 4). Two abandoned sedentary camps, *Kokoso* and *Dikoba na Lingimba* are the origins of the present camps. When a vehicle road was constructed to the village for installation of a logging company (Hayashi 2000; Kitanishi 2006), they were abandoned.

The logging company employed many local people, which gave the Baka and their farmer neighbors both money and increased purchasing power (Kitanishi, 2006). In addition, the logging company brought many strangers into the area, as wage laborers. They invested their salaries in cacao plantations. After the logging company departed, most of these workers left the area. However, some chose to remain and continue cacao cultivation. By that time, many Baka had started cacao cultivation near their settlements (Oishi 2012).

## INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE BAKA AND MOSLEM MERCHANTS

Here the economic, social and power relationships existing between the Baka and Moslem merchants is described with reference to the classification of relationships between hunter-gatherers and farmers of Spielman and Eder (1994).

### 1) Economic relationships

#### Trade relationships

Moslem merchants provide a variety of daily necessities such as salt, soap, oil, biscuit, etc. as merchandises (Figure 5). Since the increase of cacao prices, in the latter half of the 2000s, more non-Moslem merchants, many of whom are Bamileke and Bamoun, from central and western Cameroon, have been coming to the research area. They bring products such as beer, whisky and red wine from cities. Although these products are two to four times more expensive than in large cities<sup>3</sup>), they are popular among the local people. Bottled beer and red wine in paper packs are too expensive for most Baka to purchase regularly. However, a small and more affordable (priced at 250–300FCFA)<sup>4</sup>) 40–50ml pack of whisky, known as a *sache whisky* (“whisky bag”), in French is enough for them (Figure 6). The high alcohol content (40–50%) appeals to the Baka. Considerable quantities of beer and whisky are distributed during the cacao harvesting season (Oishi and Hayashi 2014).

Some non-Moslem merchants settled down and opened bars close to the Baka settlements. From early afternoon to midnight, these bars sell a variety of alcoholic drinks and tobacco, and play popular music. They have had a significant impact on the social life of Baka adults. The Mokakasa settlement provides an example. In 2004, there was a *bandjo* space in the center of the settlement. A *bandjo* is a public space open to all members of the settlement. It was used by Baka men for sharing meals, chatting, playing traditional guitars, and discussing matters of importance. In 2011, the *Bandjo* disappeared completely and people



Figure 5 A merchant from northern Cameroon and his daughters (Photograph by author)



Figure 6 Plastic bag of whisky (Photograph by author)

gathered around bars instead (Figure 7).

A bar is quite different from a *bandjo* in that it is a space where farmers, merchants and others mix. The change in the Mokakasa settlement was radical. However, it was not an isolated case, as disappearance of the *bandjo* occurred almost simultaneously in other settlements, such as Mbako, Limbila, and Nbuda, which are relatively distant from bars (Oishi and Hayashi 2014).



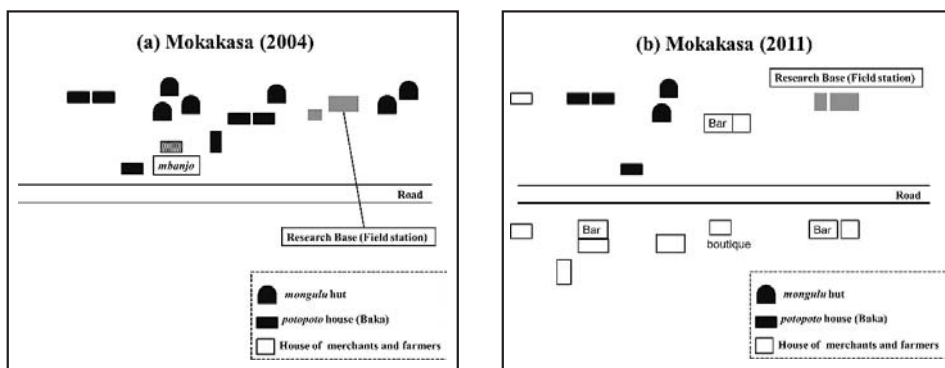


Figure 7 Spatial arrangements at the Mokakasa settlement in 2004 and 2011 (Source: Oishi and Hayashi 2014)

### Employment relationship

The increased importance of Baka labor for cacao cultivation has changed relationships among the area’s ethnic groups. The Baka have come to recognize the value of their labor for owners of cacao plantation. As long as the current labor shortage continues, the Baka can choose where to work, and have the power to negotiate conditions of employment. They do not wish to be forced to work in

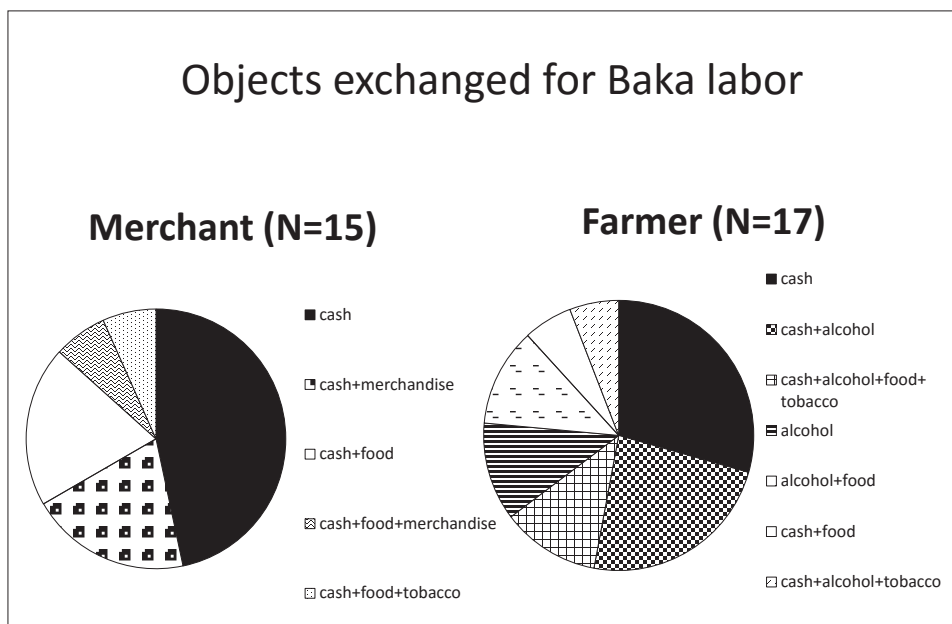
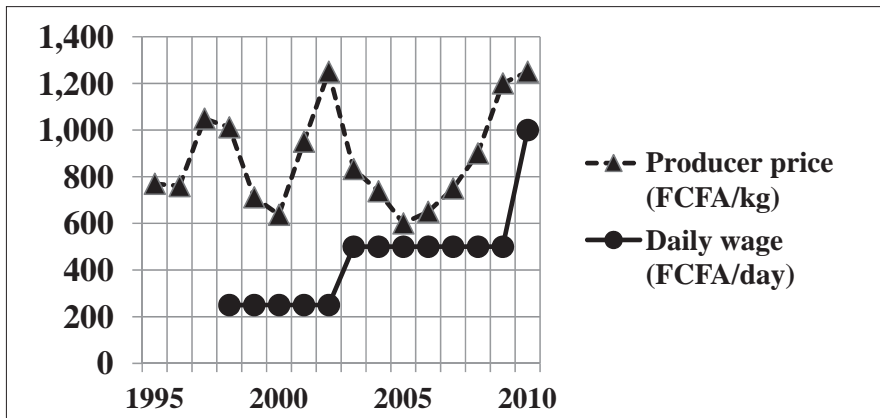


Figure 8 Comparison of items exchanged for Baka labor by merchants and farmers. In 2010 research period, I asked each cacao cultivator who work with Baka laborer to free-list objects that they use in exchange for Baka labor. I got response from 32 informants (15 merchants and 17 farmers)



**Figure 9** Change in producer prices of cacao and daily wages for Baka workers (1995–2010)  
(Source: Oishi 2012)

the Bakwele plantations, because they derive more benefits from working for cash in the plantations of the Hausa and newly arrived merchants. Although the Baka attitude toward the Bakwele has changed drastically, the latter have not accepted this change and still regard the Baka as their “clients” and subject to their control. The Baka want to be more independent from the Bakwele and to establish more equal relationships with them. There is, therefore, a growing discrepancy between these groups in their perception of the degree of interdependence, which often results in conflicts. In contrast, the Baka regard the Hausa merchants as their new “patrons” who treat them better than the Bakwele. The Hausa, however, regard the Baka only as wage laborers and are unwilling to try to control a Baka’s life beyond the terms of a labor contract.

The largest employer of Baka is the owner of the biggest plantation, who is recognized as the most economically influential person in the village. He employs more than 50 Baka workers. He employs only Baka for plantation work, and retains skilled workers for 3–4 months by a contract, paying some 100,000 to 150,000 FCFA for this period. He does not employ Bakwele farmers, believing that they do not work as seriously as the Baka, and complain about their low wages. He recognizes that his success rests on a relationship of trust with his Baka workers, and it has attracted many other merchants to the area, who now have adopted the same approach.

It is common for the Baka to receive their wages in advance from the Bakwele in the form of distilled liquor, their craving for which causes them to become indebted to farmers. If the amount of debt accumulates, or a Baka who received advance payment abandons farm work, the farmer will demand cash repayment.

In northeastern Republic of Congo, Bobanda farmers also frequently use tobacco, alcohol and marijuana to maintain their labor force, giving them to their

Aka partners in a fictive kinship relationship. Hanawa (2004) termed such donation “advance gift”, because it usually occurs before the barter exchange. The Aka wish to receive these gifts, but they try to avoid being forced into labor by the farmers (Hanawa 2004).

Sakanashi (2010) asserts that in southern Cameroon, the labor use of the Baka by the Fang is not a straightforward employer-employee relationship. The Fang farmers make considerable efforts to maintain social relationships with the Baka by offering a variety of items, including agricultural foods, bush meats and palm wine. In this research, farmers maintained a traditional patron-client relationship and used a labor force of hunter-gatherers in a reciprocal framework (Hanawa 2004; Sakanashi 2010). The farmers try to take advantage, but hunter-gatherers try to balance the inequalities by stealing crops and working slowly. However, monetization of economic exchange has made it difficult for farmers to maintain such an unequal patron-client relationship. Here the *advance gift*, which Hanawa defined in Bobanda-Aka relationships, has changed to *advance payment* (Oishi and Hayashi 2014).

#### **Debt systems between the Baka and merchants**

To handle debts, people in the study area use two types of local finance system. One is called *yana*, a system of cash loan for cacao production. It is a credit system for payment in advance to sellers from buyers, who have the right to the bags of cacao at a fixed rate. It usually involves a high rate of interest. The price of cacao in this type of transaction varied greatly among regions and from one contract to another, and depends on negotiation between the parties involved. For example, some interview data showed that the rate varies between 20,000 and 40,000 FCFA per 100kg bag of dried cacao beans. The *yana* system occurs widely in Eastern Province, and probably in other parts of Cameroon, suggesting its long history in the cacao growing regions.

Another local credit system is the rent of a cacao plantation, which is called *location* in French. A plantation owner gives the right of use to a renter in exchange for money. The contract can be made each year, starting from the end of cacao selling season, normally in December-February, to the next selling season, and is renewable without limit depending on negotiation between the renter and owner. The mean rent rate was 65,000 FCFA per hectare per annum. However, the rate varies depending on the negotiation between renter and owner. It is always the owner who retains the initiative in the negotiation, because the renter usually has an immediate need for cash to pay for things like medical treatment, initiation of a son, marriage, funeral, and other social and cultural obligations. Reflecting that many Bakwele are concerned about witchcraft issues, they need cash to either prevent or cure a misfortune caused by sorcery. The Baka call rental contract *demande d'aide* (“asking for help”) in French, which suggests an economical dependent relations regarding this type of transaction. The flow of contracts seems unidirectional, from Baka to Bakwele, and then from Bakwele to migrant

**Table 1** Lender-borrower combinations in cacao plantation rents (Source: Oishi, unpublished data)

		Borrower				
		Baka	Bantu	Merchants	Unknown	Total
Lender	Baka	0	9	14	2	25
	Bantu	0	7	10	0	17
	Merchants	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	16	24	2	42

merchants.

Rent rates vary among the ethnic group combination involved in a contract (Table 1). The Bakwele would not pay much rent to the Baka, whereas non-native Hausa merchant-farmers pay the Baka almost twice as much cash as do the Bakwele. Other merchant-farmers, such as the Bamileke, who recently immigrated into the area, pay even more than do Hausa merchant-farmers, who have lived for a long time among the local populations.

This rent system is said to have been introduced to the study area in the 2003–2004 season by a cacao buyer from Moloundou City. A rental contract requires the local authority's signed approval, but it is relatively open compared with *yana*, that is, the payment in advance at a disadvantageous rate to the sellers. When a person rents a plantation, he will be in charge of all its management, which requires enormous efforts. By contrast, *yana* is generally thought to be more efficient way of making money with only a small investment. However, there is also a risk that the creditor will not bring the cacao as promised. Merchant-farmers who run large plantations usually prefer renting to payment in advance for the harvest. The sale of a plantation occurs when cash credit exceeds a certain level. A merchant-farmer who extends a large amount of credit, often asks the borrower (either Baka or Bakwele) to cede the plantation instead of requesting repayment of the credit that has become too large.

In a case of plantation rent between a Baka and a Hausa merchant, it was observed that they made an additional rental contract for another 2–3 years in advance before the first contract period had begun. In most cases contract papers are drawn-up by the borrower, because few Baka lenders are literate in French, meaning that they must sign the contract with little knowledge of its contents. If necessary, the borrower sends the contract for authorization, to the local governmental authority in Moloundou, the administrative capital city. Contracts are authorized without any investigation into their legal validity. With the signature of a local governmental officer, the borrower will be protected from any claims by the lender.

Twenty-five (43%) of the Baka's cacao plantation were rented to Hausa and Bamileke merchant-farmers, and the Bakwele. As demonstrated above, contracts terms are unequal between lenders and borrowers, which begs the question of why

Baka rent their plantations so frequently. Interviews with Baka lenders gave various reasons for going to the merchant-farmers 'asking for help'. These included: treatment of disease, social obligation for funerals, marriage, *beka* initiation, and the like. Compared with the Bakwele, who need cash for treating psycho-social problems like sorcery, the Baka need cash for immediate, concrete and practical reasons. In particular, they want cash for drinking alcohol. This greatly increases their indebtedness.

However, indebtedness to farmers or merchants is not the only reason why the Baka pursue rental contracts; there may be other, internal reasons for it. The following two cases show the Baka use of the rental system to cope with cacao thefts by other Bakas, and to secure their cash income when absent from the village where cacao sales take place.

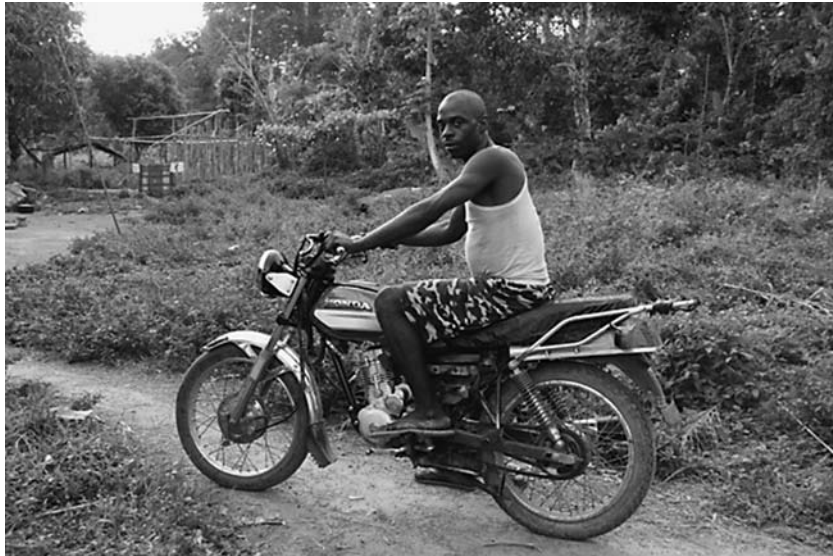
The first case deals with a middle-aged Baka man who has more than 1.5 ha of cacao plantation. He said that he put his plantation into rental contract because of the possible theft of his cacao beans by other Baka. He said that the theft of food crops, like plantain is different from that of cacao; the former is a staple food needed by everyone, whereas the latter is necessary for some specific purposes. He also added that he needs to 'see his money,' even if it has to be shared with others. His complaint is consistent with previous reports that emphasize the importance of ownership, even in a society where sharing prevails (see, Kitanishi 2001).

Another example is from a middle-aged Baka man who had once worked for a logging company as a machine operator. He rented his plantation to the Hausa merchant-farmer known as the 'economic father' of the village. He made rental contracts because he thought his relatives might not take care of his plantation when he was absent, and also, because he wanted money for travelling to Ngato, about 300 km away from his village. When he returned from the journey after two years, he demanded additional payment from the merchant-farmer, because he rented the plantation for two years. After receiving 100,000 FCFA, he recovered the plantation, and managed it himself.

### **The other economic relationships**

New forms of economic relationships emerge between the Baka and merchants. Here motorcycle taxi and house rental are described as examples. Some young Baka borrow motorbikes from merchant friends to operate a taxi service. Some Baka men serve taxi in villages as well as in adjacent cities like Moloundou or Yokadouma (Figure 10). This relationship is temporary and flexible, and the persons involved share the profits of the service.

The second case concerns a Baka man renting houses to merchants. Mike<sup>5</sup>, a young Baka, constructed three houses for renting to Hausa merchants (Figure 11). He conceived the idea by observing that Hausa merchants will pay 15,000 FCFA per month to rent a house.



**Figure 10** A young Baka man riding the motorbike used for providing a taxi service (Photograph by author)



**Figure 11** Mike, standing in the center in this photo, a Baka owner of the rental houses (Photograph by author)

## 2) Social relationships

### Intermarriage

As the number of residential merchants grew, there was a concomitant

increase in marriages or affairs between male merchants and Baka women. Between 2005 and 2010, there were at least ten couples and five cases of marriage. Most marriages are uxorilocal (which is called as *mukokofe* in Baka) with merchants residing in Baka settlements. Children belong to the merchant's ethnic group.

#### Case 1: Abdul and Marry

Abdul, a middle-aged Kotoko male, is from an area near Lake Chad, in the extreme northern part of Cameroon, immigrated to the research area about 15 years ago. He once operated a small business and then switched to fishing, at which he was fairly competent. Abdul married a Baka female, Marry, in 2006. He lives with Marry's family, and shares his fish surplus with the Baka at the camp. Abdul and Marry have two daughters, both of whom have moslem names (Figure 12). Abdul started cacao cultivation when his father-in-law gave him a parcel of land.



**Figure 12** The Abdul family  
(Photograph by author)

#### Case 2: Ben and Kate

Ben is a Moslem male from Mali. He immigrated to the research site around 2002, and in 2005 married a Baka female named Kate. They had a child in 2008. Kate told me that Ben satisfied her with many gifts, such as clothes and merchandise.<sup>6)</sup> After their child was born, Ben installed himself at Marry's family's camp. In 2008, Ben complained to the author about Kate's infidelity, and soon they divorced. Ben took their child, who often visits her mother's community (Figure 13).

In both cases, merchant males and Baka females developed their relationships based on daily interaction. Merchant males resided at the Baka females' compound and speak the Baka language. In particular,



**Figure 13** Ben and his child with Kate  
(Photograph by author)

Abdul succeeded in building close relationships with all Baka households in the same camp.

### 3) Power relationships

No pseudo-kinship was observed between the Baka and merchants. Moslem merchants have religious ties, but, unlike an ethnic group, they lack a group entity. The Baka and merchants interact based on individual decision-making, which makes their relations flexible and equal. When a merchant employs an individual Baka for a considerable period, the merchant does not think that he “owns” that person. This is unlike the attitude of the farmers. However, merchants help their Baka laborers with medical care and the other small needs. Merchants support the Baka, but they do not intervene politically against them. On the other hand, Baka laborers refer to merchants as “patron” or “father”, expecting more than just an employment relationship.

In economic relationships, the Baka and merchants are often quite unequal, as demonstrated by the case of land rents. Thus, their relationship is politically equal but economically unequal, compared to that between the Baka and neighboring farmers which is politically unequal and economically competing.

## DISCUSSION

### 1) Changing relationship between Hunter-Gatherers, Farmers and Migrants

The introduction of cacao as a cash crop increased the value of the labor of Baka hunter-gatherers, and that could have facilitated their economic independence from the Bakwele (Kitanishi 2006; Oishi 2012). However, some Baka have become alcoholic, and to obtain drink they depend on the cash economy, rather than using it as an opportunity to improve their life.

In addition to the traditional interdependent relationships, the Bakwele try to attract Baka by providing alcohol. In this they are not very successful. The Baka do not want to be forced to work in the plantations of Bakwele, because they derive more immediate benefits from the working opportunities offered by newly arrived merchants. Some Baka abandon their own plantations and go to help Bantu farmers' or work on merchant-farmers' plantations for wage or small amounts of alcohol. When they get paid, they go immediately to drink alcohol. Once the Baka begin drinking, they cannot stop before they have become indebted. As their indebtedness increases, they feel they cannot manage their own plantation by themselves<sup>7)</sup>, and they rent, or even sell it. Nevertheless, Baka create new plantations every year. It seems that they are working for others although their indebtedness is increasing, rather than for developing their own plantations. The Baka's attitude toward the Bakwele has been changed drastically, but the Bakwele still regards the Baka as their “clients.” There is growing discrepancy in their attitudes toward each other. In this situation, the Baka sometimes try to



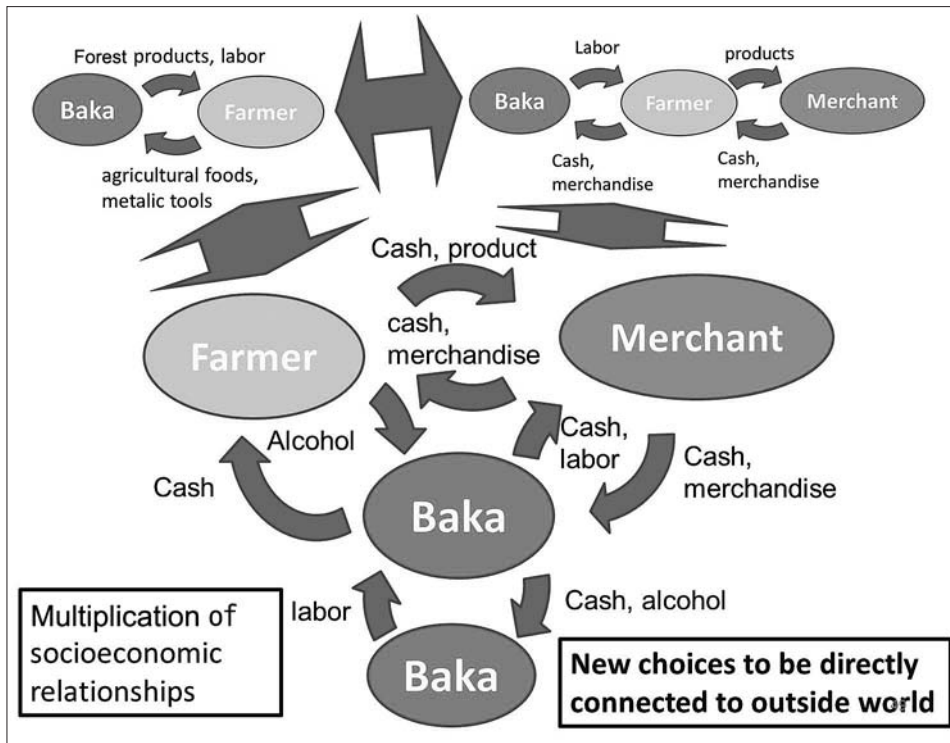


Figure 14 The combination of socioeconomic relationships between the Baka and the others

maneuver transactions with merchant-farmers, as seen in the cases of overlapping rentals and sales. This serves to counterbalance the exploitation of the Baka labor by merchant-farmers.

## 2) Social stratification between the Baka and the challenge for co-existence

A few Baka try to accumulate money. They may have gradually understood and begun to take advantage of the new opportunities that money provides. Money has broad purchasing power, and by saving it, they can later buy whatever they need. Although most continue to spend their money immediately, some have begun to save it for their future and to make investments. The monetary economy in the study area is thus creating economic inequalities, even within a single ethnic group like the Baka.

The new opportunities provided by money and the relationship to merchants may increase equality among the people involved in cash transactions, since cash transactions assume an equal relationship in the exchange (i.e., one person's FCFA is as good as another's), regardless of ethnicity or occupation (Figure 14). Baka narratives reveal their strong desire to occupy an equal social status with their neighboring farmers and merchants. With increasing chances to achieve economic

success, the Baka now have an opportunity to develop greater sociopolitical autonomy in their local contexts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Bakwele, the Baka and the Hausa of the District of Moloundou, Department of Boumba and Ngoko, East Region, the Republic of Cameroon. Mr. Nsonkali Charles-Jones, Mr. Ndoumbe David, and Mr. Mobisa Pierre helped me conduct field research. This study was supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Young Researchers from Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Japan (Grant Nos. 21820018 and 23720424), a Kyoto University Research Grant for Young Researchers (FY2008–2009), Research Grants from the Sasakawa Foundation for Promotion of Science (No. 18–35) and the Takanashi Foundation for Arts and Archaeology, Japan.

## NOTES

- 1) In this chapter, folk term is given in italic. Brisson translated *mbúnge* as european and bureaucrat (Brisson 2010).
- 2) Every settlement has a common name shared by the Baka. In previous documents, for example, Kimura (2003) formerly referred Mokakasa settlement as Mbaka1, and Monbongu settlement as Mbaka2 respectively.
- 3) For example, bottled beer (0.65 liter) costs 1,000 FCFA in the research area whereas it costs 400–500FCFA in large cities (Oishi and Hayashi 2014).
- 4) FCFA is an abbreviation for Franc de la coopération Financière en Afrique centrale (Franc of the Financial cooperation in central Africa). The exchange rate is fixed at 656FCFA per one Euro.
- 5) In this paper, all given names are pseudonyms.
- 6) Baka young women tend to prefer wealthy men for their potential husbands in mate preference survey conducted by the author (Oishi 2008).
- 7) Baka often use the French expression, “ça me dépasse,” to tell that they are tired of plantation management.

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