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The Impact of Commoditisation on the Mbuti of Eastern Zaire

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The Mbuti hunter-gatherers in the Teturi region of Eastern Zaire have experienced considerable economic and social change since the recent introduction of meat trading and wage labour. While contact with the market economy is not a recent event, in the past it was made indirectly by way of their agricultural neighbours. Today, however, the Mbuti are directly involved in commodity exchange. This paper analyses the various consequences for their economic and social life of their direct involvement in commodity exchange.

First, there is a brief description of the history of Mbuti relations with surrounding societies to place the present day society in context. Second, the flow of commodities into this central part of the Ituri Forest, is described to show the extent to which the people are exposed to commodities and the cash economy. Third, the significance of barter in the face of the increasing prevalence of cash is discussed. While almost everything can now be purchased for cash, the Mbuti mainly obtain commodities through the direct exchange of one commodity for another. Fourth, the most important commodity exchange for the Mbuti, meat trading, is described, and various social and economic changes caused by this meat trading are discussed.

CONTACT WITH SURROUNDING SOCIETIES

It has been generally assumed that the Mbuti hunter-gatherers are the aboriginal inhabitants of the Ituri Forest of Zaire. According to this view, they led a self-sustaining life for thousands of years before contact with the cultivators who immigrated into the forest several hundred years ago [TURNBULL 1965]. Recent studies, however, present a quite different view of their history. They suggest that the first contact of the Mbuti with the cultivators occurred much earlier, about 2,000 to 3,000 years ago [BAHUCHET and GUILLAUME 1983; BAILEY 1985; HART and HART 1986; VANSINA 1986]. The question now posed is whether a hunter-gatherer way of life was possible in the tropical rain forests of Africa before the presence of cultivators in the area. The reason for this is that some people now argue that there are not enough energy-rich wild vegetables in the forest to sustain human subsistence throughout the year. However without detailed information on the full range of plant and animal resources which have potential value for human

consumption the validity of this argument cannot be answered yet. Drawing a conclusion based solely on the information on the resources which are actually utilised by the present-day Mbuti ignores the possibility that there may be species which were eaten by the people before the introduction of agricultural foods but which are no longer used.

Whether or not they are the original inhabitants of the Ituri Forest, it is probably true that the Mbuti have been in a symbiotic relationship with neighbouring Bantu and Sudanic cultivators for a much longer period of time than they were thought to be. In this relationship, the Mbuti have provided the cultivators with game meat, other forest products, the labour needed for cultivation and miscellaneous village works, while the latter have provided the Mbuti with farm food, salt, tobacco, clothes and iron implements. The traditional exchange between Mbuti and their partners does not take the form of direct exchange based on a fixed exchange rate, for even when the Mbuti have little or no meat to exchange they can get farm food from their village partners. Such exchange is therefore similar to gift exchange which occurs irregularly in a social framework. The Mbuti and the villagers call each other by fictive kinship terms [HART 1979; ICHIKAWA 1982; TERASHIMA 1986] according to which all the kinsmen of the villagers are also regarded as the kinsmen of the Mbuti. As the Mbuti are considered to be in a somewhat subordinate position by the villagers, the relationship between the two groups may be called a "patron-client" relationship.

Through the endurance of this symbiotic or patron-client relationship over the centuries, the hunting life of the Mbuti has been considerably changed. For example, the Bantu cultivators introduced the new technology of net hunting to the Mbuti [HARAKO 1976; VANSINA 1986], which must have improved their hunting productivity. However, until recently, the relationship of the Mbuti with the market economy was not direct, but mediated by their village patrons. The goods the Mbuti obtained from the villagers were mostly regional products and were not imported from outside the Ituri Forest. Although far from self-sufficient, the economy of the Mbuti mostly drew on the regional economy.

The ivory trade first brought the Mbuti into contact with the world economy. It was introduced in a violent form by Arab traders and their local subordinates in the latter half of the 19th century and intensified by Belgian officials after "la Campagne contre les Arabes" from 1892 to 1894 [STANLEY 1890; FORBATH 1977; HART 1979; SAMBA 1982; WAEHLE 1985]. The Mbuti, who up until then had mainly speared bush pigs and other medium-sized game, began to hunt elephants actively and quite quickly became famous as elephant-hunters, which marked their first step into the market economy, as Hart [1979] pointed out. However, even after colonial rule was imposed, the ivory trade was mediated by the village patrons. When a Mbuti killed an elephant, he usually brought the ivory and some meat to his patron, who sold these to the traders or colonial officials. The Mbuti were allowed to take as much farm food as they wanted from the patron's field, and were later given salt, tobacco, metal pots and some clothes by the patron [ICHIKAWA

1982]. Even today, the Efe in the northern part of the Ituri Forest do not sell ivory by themselves, but bring it to their Lese patrons, whenever they kill an elephant. Their exclusion from the ivory trade is partly rationalised by the fact that game belongs to the owners of the weapons used to kill it, and they are mostly owned by their patrons.

Since the colonial rule was imposed in 1908, cash and commoditisation has been gradually permeating the Ituri Forest. When the main roads penetrating the forest were constructed between the late 1920s and 1940s, the settler Europeans built palm-oil and cotton plantations and small gold mines in various parts of the forest [SAMBA 1982; HARAKO 1976; TURNBULL 1983]. These enterprises as well as the construction and maintenance of the roads opened up employment opportunities leading many people to migrate into the forest from the densely populated areas to the north and east. They were even forced to migrate to the roadside. Besides working for the plantation and the mines, the new immigrants cleared the forest to cultivate subsistence and cash crops. In addition the Nande people came from the hilly country to the east where land shortage was a serious problem, taking up plots for cultivation. The movement of these people into the forest had an impact on the traditional symbiotic relationship between the Mbuti and the cultivators, especially between the Mbuti and the Bira living in the southern and eastern parts of the forest.

Because the Mbuti elephant hunting provided the plantation and mine workers with their main protein source (meat), hunting was quickly intensified following their movement into the area. In the 1950s, some Mbutis in the Teturi region (Figure 1) had to travel upto a hundred kilometres from their original territory to hunt elephants. In this period, plantations, small gold mines, and Catholic and Protestant churches were built in various parts of the forest, and the Mbuti often moved to these places which seemed more attractive to them. Owing to this much increased mobility of the Mbuti resulting from the new economic and social conditions, the traditional symbiotic relationship with the villagers weakened.

Another important factor which had a considerable impact on the hunting life was the introduction of meat trading by the Nande people who came from the east in the late 1950s [HART 1978]. The hilly country of the Nande homeland lies to the east of the Ituri Forest and represents one of the most densely populated areas in Zaire. As colonisation proceeded, there formed in this area various population centres such as Butembo, Beni, Hoycha, and Bunia (Figure 1). Meat was in great demand as a protein source in these population centres, because few livestock were kept except for chickens and some goats which were usually only eaten on ritual occasions. While the meat from the forest served as a cheap supply of protein, it was also valued by the people because of the belief that the forest meat provided them with more strength than fish or the meat of domestic animals.

The traders, mostly the Nande from the east, obtained the meat from the Mbuti by barter, carried it on their backs (often with the help of the Mbuti) halfway, then transported it by a small vehicle to the local towns such as, Beni and

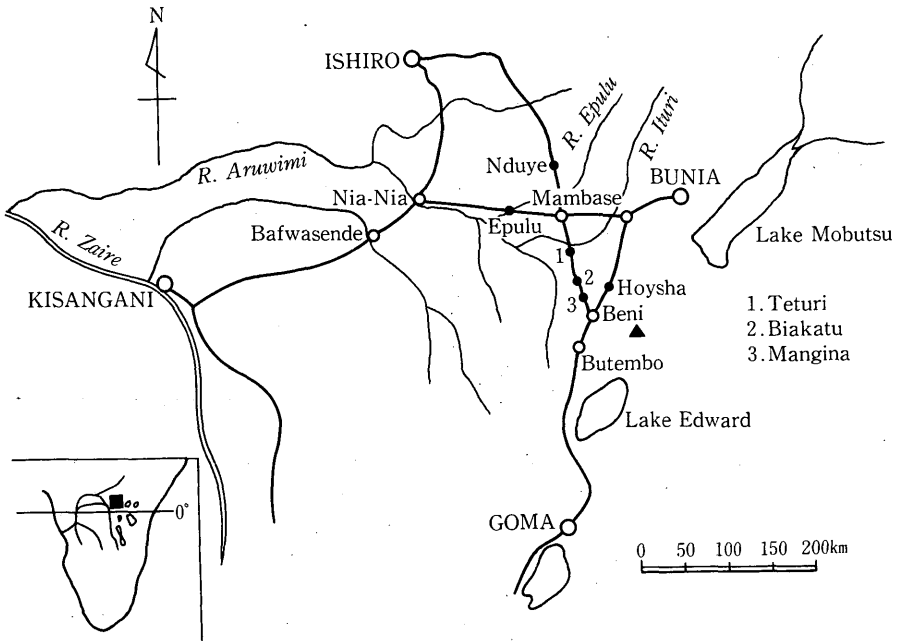


Figure 1. The study area.

Butembo, and sold it at a price up to three to five times higher than that in the forest. At first, the traders stayed at the patrons' village and waited for the Mbuti to bring the meat from the forest. But before long they themselves reached the forest hunting camps in order to get a better exchange rate and a quick supply of meat. They carried to the camp the Mbuti's favourite food such as cassava flour and rice, tobacco, loin cloths and used clothes and exchanged them for meat at fixed exchange rates. Through such barter transactions based on fixed rates of exchange, the Mbuti became directly involved in a commodity economy for the first time. The new type of economy was fundamentally different from the traditional gift exchange economy made in the framework of pseudo-kinship or patron-client relationship. Since the introduction of this new type of hunting economy, hunting itself has become intensified. While the origin of the net hunting dates back a long way [VANSHINA 1986], it was not until the introduction of meat trading that most of the Mbuti possessed their own hunting nets and carried out intensive net hunting. According to the old men in the Teturi region, the Mbuti had not enough nets even 30 to 40 years ago, and they borrowed the nets of their Bira patrons when hunting.

From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, coffee plantations were opened in various parts of the forest [HART 1978; BAILEY 1982; SAMBA 1982], but shortly after independence, these plantations became stagnant mainly due to the fall of international coffee prices and political unrest. The sudden "Zairinisation" policy announced in 1973 caused further stagnation of plantation management [YOUNG and TURNER 1985]. However, after the Simba Rebellion was settled in the late

1960s and the international price recovered in the late 1970s, new coffee plantations were opened and old ones reopened. The Nande immigrants also began to cultivate a substantial amount of cash crops such as rice and groundnuts as well as some coffee. Since there were vast areas of uncultivated land in the Ituri Forest, land was not a problem to them, but the labour force was crucial to the intensification and growth of their agriculture. There has been an increasing demand on the Mbuti as a labour force. As the newly immigrating Nande people had been already involved in a cash economy and had no such symbiotic ties as the Bira had with the Mbuti, they secured the Mbuti's labour in a different way. They asked the Mbuti for labour in exchange for a certain amount of agricultural food. The exchange rate was fixed: one days labour for 3 to 4 plants of cassava or one of plantain, which yields 10 to 15 kg of raw cassava or plantain. This type of labour is called "para juru," derived from "par jour" in French, and has become common among most of the Mbuti in central and southern parts of the forest. The introduction of meat trading which is not mediated by the villagers and the day-based labour which is regularly paid in kind, have now weakened the traditional economic and social system.

Moreover, since the early 1980s when the Government of Zaire permitted the local people to mine gold dust, which had been prohibited since independence, the population of the Teturi region has again rapidly increased¹⁾. As purchase power increased in the Teturi region, several shops were opened and various commodities began to flow into the area. Owing to population concentration, the shortage of food, land and labour near the villages has become a serious problem. A local market was opened in the late 1970s to sell food regularly to the miners and their families who do not cultivate much by themselves. As food was not a thing to be sold but to be shared in traditional society, the opening of a market in the Teturi region indicates the increasing involvement of the people in a cash economy. The Mbuti's involvement in the market economy has also been accelerated. Some of them are now employed as forest guides or porters by the miners and others even try to mine by themselves with a shovel and a pan. I often heard the story of a Mbuti man who struck it rich just before the government liberalised gold mining. He bought a bicycle, radio, and a quantity of clothes all at once and treated his patrons as well as his own kinsmen everyday to the local beer, until his money was confiscated by the soldiers from Mambasa who heard of his success.

1) There were, in 1975, about 600 Mbutis and about the same number of villagers in the Teturi region. Even though by 1985 the Mbuti had increased to more than 800, the non-Mbuti population has increased at a much higher rate, because many people have immigrated into the region for mining from various parts of northeastern Zaire. Large villages of more than 100 people have been formed, which had never been observed in the Teturi region before the liberalisation of gold mining. The population of the Mambasa district (Zone de Mambasa) is approximately 95,000.

THE COMMODITY ECONOMY IN THE TETURI REGION

Flow of commodities into the area

As the market economy permeates the Teturi region, various foreign industrial products flow into it. When the first research was done in 1974, there were only two stores where small quantities of goods were sold, including loin cloths, some used shirts and trousers, cooking pots, salt and cigarettes. These stores were not very useful to the local people, because the owners were themselves cultivators and often absent for cultivation or other village work. The villagers who obtained substantial amounts of money either consumed these drinking, or went as far as Mambasa and Beni to purchase clothes, shoes, blankets, etc. After the liberalisation of gold mining, several other stores were opened. In 1987, there were seven stores, a bakery and a bar in Teturi. The commodities sold at these stores included Zairean made groceries like soap, matches, cigarettes, and various imported goods from all over the world. The imported commodities included: tinned foods, mainly sardines, from Thailand, Japan, Brazil, Chile, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Yugoslavia and Namibia; condensed milk from Holland; powdered milk from Holland and Kenya; tomato paste from Italy; salt, margarine, biscuits and sweets from Kenya; anti-malaria, antibiotic, antipyretic and antiseptic medicines from Switzerland, England and Kenya; machetes from China and Brazil; knives from Germany; torches, spoons, enamel cups, plates and bowls, hoes, shovels, umbrellas, needles and thread from China; fishing hooks from Norway; nylon fishing lines from Japan; fishing nets from Taiwan; kerosene lamps from England, India and China; candles from India and Kenya; dry batteries from Kenya and Tanzania; digital wristwatches (named Honda, Toyota or Suzuki) from Hongkong; shirts and other clothes from France, Lebanon, Taiwan, Hongkong and Kenya. This long list of commodities sold in Teturi shows the importance of international trade even in the local economy of the study area, which forms only a small part of Zaire. These commodities are sold in the stores at fixed prices, and no discount is usually made in selling them.

Another form of commodity circulation occurs in the local market and since 1985 it has been held regularly twice a week. The major items sold at this market are the staple or sub-staple foods, such as raw and dried cassava, rice, plantain, sweet bananas, haricot beans, and groundnuts (Table 1). Some of the dried cassava, maize and rice are bought at Mangina (65 km from Teturi) or Biakatu (32 km) and transported on human backs to Teturi, where they are sold at prices about 1.5 to 2 times higher than those at Biakatu or Mangina. Palm oil and tobacco leaves are bought at Mambasa and carried to Teturi and sold there too. Most of the sellers at the market including the peddlers of clothes and groceries are Nande people. Some Bira women also sell their own farm produce at the market, and a few are engaged in the transportation of commodities to make a profit from the price differences between Biakatu and Teturi, or between Mambasa and Teturi.

Of more than 800 sellers observed at the market from September to October,

Table 1. Commodities observed at the local market in Teturi.

Commodity	Place of origin	Frequency	No. of sellers	Mean	Remarks
cassava flour	Teturi, Ituri	8	134 (N=7)	19.1	mainly from Mangina
plantain	Teturi	8	137	17.1	
haricot bean	Teturi, Ituri	8	75	9.4	
palm oil	Ituri	8	46 (N=6)	7.7	from Mambasa
fresh cassava	Teturi	8	47 (N=7)	6.7	
sweet banana	Teturi	8	41	5.1	
husked rice	Teturi, Ituri	8	38	4.6	
groundnut	Teturi, Ituri	8	29	3.6	
salted fish	Zaire	8	25 (N=7)	3.6	from the Great Lakes
salt	foreign	8	28	3.5	
clothes	foreign (Zaire)	8	24	3.0	printed in Zaire
chilly	Teturi	8	23	2.9	
fried bread ^(*)	Teturi	6	23	2.9	made from cassava flour and banana
tobacco leaf	Ituri	6	15	1.9	from Mambasa
groceries	foreign	8	14	1.8	miscellaneous industrial products
maize ^(*)	Teturi	6	10	1.3	
chakuchaku	Teturi	6	10	1.3	Solanum leaves
kwanga ^(*)	Teturi	6	10	1.3	smashed and steamed cassava
bread ^(*)	Ituri	6	7	0.9	from Mangina
taro ^(*)	Teturi	5	7	0.9	boiled
kpedekpede	Teturi	4	7	0.9	Amaranthus leaves
leek	Ituri	4	6	0.8	from Mangina
onion	Ituri, Zaire	3	6	0.8	from Mangina and Butembo
sweet potato	Teturi	4	5	0.6	
amakakacha	Teturi	4	5	0.6	mushroom
monkey meat	Teturi	4	5	0.6	shot by gun
pumpkin	Teturi	4	4	0.5	
unhusked rice	Teturi	2	4	0.5	for sowing
spinach	Teturi	3	3	0.4	
isamba	Teturi	2	3	0.4	mushroom
yam ^(*)	Teturi	2	2	0.3	boiled
sorghum	Teturi, Ituri	2	2	0.3	for brewing local beer
sugar cane ^(*)	Teturi	2	2	0.3	
smoked fish	Teturi	2	2	0.3	
kerosene	foreign	2	2	0.3	
stool	Teturi	2	2	0.3	made of palmwood
broom	Teturi	2	2	0.3	made of ribs of oil palm
cassava leaf	Teturi	1	1	0.1	
guava ^(*)	Teturi	1	1	0.1	
citron ^(*)	Ituri	1	1	0.1	from Mambasa
egg	Teturi	1	1	0.1	
beef	Ituri	1	1	0.1	cattle brought from northern savanna
knife	Teturi	1	1	0.1	
mangungu leaf	Teturi	1	1	0.1	for thatching
Total	43 items		812	107.5	

Note: for the place of origin "Ituri" denotes the area outside the Teturi Region in the Ituri Forest, and "Zaire" the area outside the Ituri Forest in Zaire.

(*) : food eaten in the market place.

Table 2. Material culture possessed by the Mbuti in 1980.

Item	Place of origin		Individuals													Total in 1980	Total in 1987	Remarks
	Band	Teturi Outside	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L				
hunting net	+		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	10	8	
spear-head	+	+(+)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12	12	Imported iron forged in Teturi. Shaft made by Mbuti.
bow	+		0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	10	5	
knife blade	+	+(+)	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	23	>20	Imported iron forged in Teturi. Fitted into a handle by Mbuti.
machete (used)		(+)	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	12	Mostly used ones obtained from villagers.
palobo axe blade		(+)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12	?	Used axe fitted into a haft by Mbuti. Specially designed for honey collecting.
amandi axe blade		(+)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	?	Axe of a villager-type.
steel wire		(+)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	For snaring animals. Imported.
hoe		(+)	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	?	Imported. A haft made by Mbuti.
shovel		(+)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	5	8	Imported. A haft made by Mbuti. For gold mining.
iron pan		(+)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	9	Imported. For gold mining.
bellows	+	+(+)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	Made of wood and fur.
anvil		(+)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	Mostly used ones obtained from the villagers.
file		(+)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	Same as above.
tongs		(+)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	Same as above.
mortar (large)		+(+)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	5	?	
mortar (small)	+	+	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	?	
basket	+		1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	18	?	
pouch		+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	?	
shoulder bag		(+)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	Nylon.
plastic container		(+)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5-6	For fetching water.
glass bottle		(+)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5-6	Obtained from the villagers.
can		(+)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	?	Obtained from the villagers.
chungu		(+)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	Large metal cooking pot.

1987, only two were Mbuti women: one sold *mangungu* leaves (which are large leaves of the *Marantaceae* family and used for thatching), and the other sold raw cassava obtained from her village patroness. The meat sold at the market shown in Table 1 was that of monkeys killed with shotguns by the villagers (shotguns were introduced into this region only a few years ago). This does not imply that the Mbuti are disinterested in the trade of meat and other forest resources, rather, it implies that the transactions of the Mbuti with other people are usually made in different ways. Most of the commodities brought by the Mbuti from the forest are bartered between the people who know each other. At present, they are not usually sold for cash to unknown people.

Table 2, shows the inventory of items of major material culture possessed by the Mbuti of the Mawanbo band in Teturi in 1980. Even at this time there were some industrial products from the outside world, such as cooking pots, enamel ware and printed cloth owned by almost all the Mbuti. In 1987, shoes, radios, wristwatches, plastic bottles, kerosene lamps and electric torches were added to this inventory. The dependence of the Mbuti on the products of other peoples or other societies is also evident in their diet. Even at a forest camp where hunting is carried out intensively, more than 60% of their caloric intake depends on farm food consisting mainly of cassava, plantains and rice [ICHIKAWA 1986]. The farm food is usually obtained through the direct exchange of meat and other forest resources, or in exchange for the women's agricultural labour. In order to get their daily food, the Mbuti rarely go to the shops or market, as they do not usually keep cash with them. Even when they acquire some cash, they spend it immediately.

It may seem curious that the Mbuti still depend on a barter style of transaction considering that a cash economy is rapidly spreading into the Ituri Forest, but it has some important functions in the present Zairean economic situation, which are discussed below.

The barter system and economic inflation

There has been a tremendous rise in prices in Zaire during recent years [YOUNG and TURNER 1985], especially in the Teturi region, where it has been compounded by population growth, shortage of commodities and the rapid increase in cash inflow after the liberalisation of gold mining. The prices of commodities rose by several hundred to a thousand times in 12 years from 1975 to 1987, as shown in Table 3. Even if the increase in the exchange rate of Zaire currency for foreign currency is taken into account (which rose 250 times over 1975 levels), the rise in price in this period is surprising. The price of local products has also been rising: staples such as plantain, cassava and rice show the highest rate of increase, indicating the level of food shortage and inflation in the local economy (Table 3).

Not all prices have been rising at the same rate. While the price of meat provided by the Mbuti rose by 1,000 times, the wage for a day's labour rose by only 250 times. The price of a loin cloth increased by as much as 50 times in the 5 years from 1975 to 1980, but only 3 times in the following 5 years, then 4 to 5 times in the

Table 3. Change in commodity prices* from 1975 to 1987.

Commodity	1975. 1	1980.10	1985. 9	1987. 9	Remarks
US\$-Zaire exchange rate	0.5	3	56	125	
Hotel (Kinshasa)	10	150	1500	5000	per night
Industrial products					
loin cloth	1	50	150	700	per piece
tin food	0.35	10	100	200	sardine in tomato
cigarettes	0.2	5	30	100	per packet
soap	0.2	2	20	30	cake of washing soap
Villager's products					
palm oil	0.25		60	100	per bottle (700 cc)
tobacco leaf		1	5	10	per leaf
palm wine	0.02	1.5	10	25	per bottle (700 cc)
spirit	0.1		50	100	distilled, per bottle (700 cc)
rice	0.02	1.5	10	20	per glass (170 g)
plantain	0.04	5	25	70	per bunch (3.5 kg)
sweet banana	0.02	2	5	10	per bunch (1.0 kg)
egg	0.03	1	5	15	
Mbuti's products					
raw meat (forest)	0.2	5	50	150	per unit** (2 kg)
dry meat (village)	0.5	15	100	300	per unit**
mangungu leaf	0.2	5	50	100	per bundle (20-25 kg)
a day's labour	0.2	3	20	50	agricultural work

Note *: the prices are shown in zaire.

** : one leg of a medium-sized duiker.

last 2 years. Not only are the prices rising tremendously, but the rates vary considerably from commodity to commodity, producing a very unstable economic situation.

If the Mbuti were selling their products for cash, they would be affected directly by the unstable economic condition of Zaire. For example, while they would have paid the cash equivalent of 5 units of meat for a loin cloth in 1975, the same cloth could be purchased for the cash equivalent of only 3 units in 1985. However, the Mbuti actually exchange their meat for cloths at a fixed rate: 5 units of meat for a loin cloth. The exchange rate in this barter is not connected with the cash prices of the meat and cloths, at least in the short term. There are thus two price systems in the Teturi region: one is for cash sales and another for barter.

A similar discrepancy is observed between labour paid in cash and that paid in kind. In Ituri, like other parts of Africa, wages are generally controlled at a low level: a day's labour for a Mbuti, if paid in cash, was 30 to 50 zaires in 1987 and had increased by only 150 to 250 times over the previous 12 years. The Mbuti in Teturi,

however, do not usually receive cash from the villager for their labour, unless they need cash for some specific purpose, for example paying taxes or bridewealth. When Mbuti men work for the villagers, every 6 men are given a large bottle (about 25 litres) of local beer, equivalent to 300 zaires. In this case they are paid equally, whether paid in cash or paid in local beer. In the case of women's daily labour, "par jour," each of them is given 3 (or 4, if the plants are small) cassava plants from which 10 to 15 kg of raw cassava can be obtained: this amount of cassava costs as much as 100 to 150 zaires at the Teturi market, and even more at the villages or at the villagers' fields. There is a discrepancy here. A woman's daily labour (A), is equivalent to 30 to 50 zaires in cash (B), and to 10 to 15 kg of cassava (C). But (B) cannot be equated to (C), although this is the logical outcome from the two equations, $(A)=(B)$ and $(A)=(C)$.

Such a discrepancy underlines the limited extent to which the cash economy prevails in this area especially as regards the function of money as a measure of value. If all the value of commodities and services were expressed by a single measure of money, there would be a single price system where all the exchanges could be rationally compared with each other. In such a system, the price of labour would be the same, whether paid in cash or in kind, and the third equation mentioned above, $(B)=(C)$, would be confirmed. In the Teturi region, however, while both labour and cassava can be exchanged for cash, the exchange of labour for cash and that of labour for cassava comprise different kinds of transaction: one is of external origin and related to the economic system of a much wider society, and the other reflects the local and traditional value system. As they are not connected and compared with each other in a single price system, the Mbuti do not seem to be troubled much about the discrepancy between the "price" of their labour paid in cash and that paid in kind.

More generally, the simple syllogism mentioned above may not be applicable to the exchange system where each transaction retains its own peculiarity and cannot readily be compared with other transactions. This seems to be an important characteristic of an economy which has not yet come to be completely dominated by cash or commodity exchange.

In some places along the major roads where the use of money is more prevalent, the products of the Mbuti and their services are often purchased for cash. The Mbuti in these areas receive in exchange for their labour as much food as they can buy with the cash paid for the same labour. I once observed a Mbuti woman selling a pile of cassava at the market. The cassava was actually obtained from the villager for whom she had worked on the previous day. She sold the cassava for 100 zaires, twice as much as she could have got if she had been paid in cash for her work. Answering to my question as to how she got the cassava, she insisted that it was given by a village woman as a gift so that she could sell it at the market, and denied that it was obtained in exchange for her day's labour. It seems to me that she did not want to connect the two types of exchange: the exchange of her work for cassava and that of cassava for cash, which are based on different economic

systems. However, if more Mbuti women sold food at the market, the discrepancy of the two "price" systems might not be accepted by both the Mbuti and the villagers.

There are thus two reasons why the barter economy continues in the face of the increasing prevalence of the cash economy. First, the Mbuti do not need much cash at present: it is the use value and not the profit itself that the Mbuti want to acquire from the exchange of their products and services. The items obtained from the exchange are food and other consumer goods which are used immediately after acquisition. They are not concerned much about the accumulation of money or other forms of wealth. When they get cash, they immediately spend it.

The second reason why barter continues is that it ensures stable exchanges in an unstable economy. While they may be better off receiving cash on some occasions on others they would not be able to buy enough food with the cash paid for their products or labour. The barter rates seem to be based on the traditional value system so that both parties may at least maintain their traditional standards of living.

The meat trade

In 1974 and 1975, the majority of the meat traders were Nande. They brought cassava flour or rice, the products from their own fields, and clothes purchased in the towns, to the Mbuti hunting camps in order to exchange them for meat. The



Photo. 1. A blue duiker captured with nets.

meat obtained in the forest was then carried to the towns where it was sold at a price 3 to 5 times as much as that in the forest. As the meat trading by the Nande became common, the Bira, the traditional patrons, found it difficult to get meat from the Mbuti without direct reciprocation. After the liberalisation of gold mining and the rapid inflow of money following it, meat could be easily sold at a good price in the region, and the traders did not need to carry it to the towns. Even the Bira find no difficulty in selling meat, where there was difficulty before as they had no relatives in the towns. Moreover, they can now purchase at the market such important trade goods as cassava flour and rice. This enables increasing numbers of Bira to be involved in the meat trade, although they do not put much effort into cultivation of surplus food for exchange by themselves.

At present, most of the traders, whether Bira or Nande, are engaged in a purely commercial activity, making a profit from the circulation of cash and commodities. The present meat trade is comprised of the following three exchanges: purchase of food or other commodities for cash at the Teturi market or in the local towns; exchange of these commodities for meat in the forest camp; sale for cash of this meat in the villages or local towns. The Mbuti are involved in this chain through barter which insulates them from the cash economy.

The unit of meat used in this exchange is one gutted blue duiker without a head, or one front or hind leg of a medium-sized duiker: the former weighs 2 to 3 kg with bones and the latter 1.5 to 2 kg. Immature and small animals less than 3 kg are not exchanged but consumed at the camp. While actual animals vary in size and weight, all mature animals are treated as equivalent in size. Although the Mbuti have no means to weigh their meat, there is certainly some standardisation of the exchange unit, which I think is an important factor in the development of commodity exchange. In 1975, one unit of blue duiker was equivalent to one front

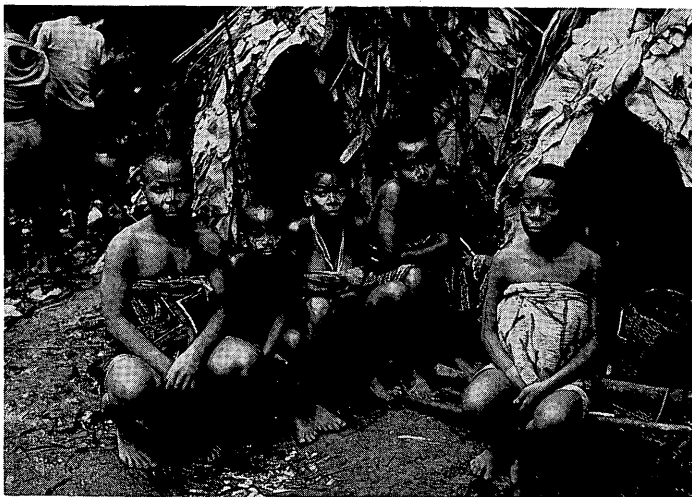


Photo. 2. Mbuti women wearing loinclothes.



Photo. 3. A meat trader sitting by a meat-drying rack in a Mbuti hunting camp.

or hind leg of a medium-sized duiker. By 1987, however, a blue duiker was valued at more than a leg of a medium-sized duiker, which was reflected in the exchange rates (Table 4).

At present, one unit of blue duiker is exchanged for 6 bowls of cassava flour

Table 4. The three exchanges comprising the meat trade in 1987.

Cash for trade goods	Trade goods for meat	Meat for cash
Cassava		
3 zaires for a plate* (up to the middle of August)	6 bowls* for a blue duiker (equivalent to 67 zaires**)	300 zaires
	5 bowls for a hind leg (equivalent to 56 zaires**)	200 zaires
	4 bowls for a front leg (equivalent to 45 zaires**)	200 zaires
5 zaires for a plate (from the middle of August)	6 bowls for a blue duiker (equivalent to 117 zaires**)	400 zaires
	5 bowls for a hind leg (equivalent to 97 zaires**)	300 zaires
	4 bowls for a front leg (equivalent to 78 zaires**)	300 zaires
Loin cloth		
700 zaires per piece	1 blue duiker and 2 front legs and 2 hind legs for a piece	1600 zaires
Cash		
	200 zaires for a blue duiker	400 zaires
	150 zaires for a hind or front leg	300 zaires

*: three to four (average 3.7) plates of dried cassava yield a bowl of refined cassava flour weighing about 360 g.

** : calculated from the average price of a bowl of flour, which is in turn calculated from dividing 700 zaires by the total number of bowls used for trade (and for credit).

(about 2,160 g), while those of hind and front legs are 5 (1,800 g) and 4 (1,440 g) bowls, respectively (Table 4). This meat for cassava flour exchange rate is almost the same as that in 1975 when one unit of meat was exchanged for 10 glasses of cassava flour, that is, 1,800 to 2,000 g [ICHIKAWA 1978]. Thus throughout the last 12 years, the Mbuti have obtained three times as many calories from cassava flour as from the meat they exchange for it²⁾. A woman's loin cloth is exchanged for one unit of blue duiker and two units each of hind and front legs, the exchange rate being exactly the same as that in 1975. While the cash price of a cloth rose by 700 times and that of meat by 1,000 times (Table 3), the exchange rate between these two has remained stable like the meat for cassava flour exchange.

The exchange rate of meat for food or cloths has remained stable not only in the long term but also against short term fluctuations in cash prices of these commodities. During the research in 1987, the price of cassava flour rose from 3 zaires to 5 per small plate, whereas the exchange rate of meat for cassava flour remained the same. The price of meat in the villages also rose, but only from 300 zaires to 400 for a unit of blue duiker and 200 zaires to 300 for a unit of medium-sized duiker. As the rate of increase in the price of meat at the villages was lower than that of cassava flour, it was the traders who were disadvantaged by this price rise.

At the forest camp, a small quantity of meat is also sold for cash. If sold for cash at the forest camp, a unit of blue duiker costs 200 zaires and that of medium-sized duiker 150 while it can be sold at the villages for 400 and 300, respectively (Table 4). In the case of barter, the amount of cassava flour exchanged for a unit of blue duiker costs about 110 zaires at the market or village, that for a hind or front leg 92 or 73 zaires. It might seem that the rates of barter are more disadvantageous to the Mbuti than those of cash sale. However, the barter rates are only nominal and should not be taken at face value, because the Mbuti always try to make the exchange as advantageous as possible.

First, when a trader arrives at the forest camp, the Mbuti request *posho ya baraza* (flour for communal use), equivalent to a unit of blue duiker, i.e. 6 bowls, which is eaten communally by males at the central hearth of a camp. Secondly, they ask for credit in the form of food, especially when the hunt is not successful. It is often the case that this credit is not paid off during the stay of the trader, and even on his next visit the remaining credit is rarely completely paid off. There is a weakness in the traders position because if they refuse credit, the Mbuti complain loudly that they are so hungry that they have no energy to hunt. If the Mbuti do not hunt, the traders will not recover the debt. Therefore, while the traders always complain about the laziness of the Mbuti and their debts, they cannot totally refuse the Mbuti further credit. The traders are also afraid that the Mbuti will not sell their meat to traders who do not grant credit. For the traders, the advantage of this

2) The calculations of nutritional composition are based on Wu Leung [1968] and Ichikawa [1986].

credit is that they may acquire meat more quickly on the next visit. They can at least demand meat from the Mbuti based on the existing debt relationship, although the traders may hardly succeed in getting meat without giving the Mbuti more flour or without allowing them another credit. In addition to these practical reasons, the traders, especially if they are the traditional patrons, often say that they can hardly refuse the Mbuti's request when the latter are hungry. This suggests the norm of reciprocity survives even between the traders and the Mbuti who are concerned with commodity exchange.

While most traders have one or two specific Mbuti groups with whom they prefer to trade, there is no fixed individual partnership between a trader and a Mbuti in which the exchange is exclusively carried out. When there are several traders in the same camp, some traders may temporarily try to secure the Mbuti as their own trading partners. Such trading partnerships will not last for a long period, because the traders are themselves part-time and are not always present at the camp. Generally speaking, both the Mbuti and the traders have a choice of whom they exchange with. Even when there is only one trader present at the camp, the Mbuti can either exchange their meat with him or carry it to the village to exchange it for raw cassava, or consume it at the camp. If a Mbuti is refused by some trader, he can go to ask other traders for another credit. The availability of such a choice makes the trading relationship potentially unstable. It also prevents a Mbuti from being completely bound to a specific trader by the debt relationship unlike the Montagnais, reported on by Murphy and Steward [1956].

Thus, while the nominal rates of exchange are fixed, the substantive rates fluctuate depending on the supply of meat. When the catch is poor, many Mbutis ask for a credit which is never completely cleared, hence the substantive exchange rates become more advantageous to the Mbuti. In the case of cash sale, however, the traders do not pay cash in advance, and the cash price is substantially fixed at least in the short term. While the cash price of meat is rising at a tremendous rate due to the inflation of Zairean economy, it seldom fluctuates as a result of supply and demand.

The following are some examples of meat trading seen from the point of view of the Bira trader, the traditional patrons of the Mbuti, in August, 1987:

Case 1: A Bira man, bought 700 zaires of dried cassava in Teturi. The cassava was pounded in a mortar by his wife, and yielded a total of 62 bowls of flour. He carried this flour and his own food on his back to the forest camp of the Mbuti. Over two weeks, he obtained 6 units of blue duiker and 4 hind legs of medium-sized duiker, and left another unit of blue duiker as a debt. He sold the blue duikers for 300 zaires each and the hind legs for 200 each. He obtained altogether 2,600 zaires and the profit was 1,900.

Case 2: The same Bira trader visited the camp again at the end of August with 700 zaires of cassava. As the price of cassava rose from 3 to 5 zaires per plate, 700 zaires of cassava yielded only 42 bowls of flour this time. He exchanged this for meat at the same rate and obtained two blue duikers and one front leg,

and left another two blue duikers, two hind legs and a front leg as debt. As the price of meat in Teturi rose from 300 zaires to 400 for a blue duiker and 200 to 300 for a hind or front leg, he obtained altogether 1,100 zaires, which was only 400 more than his original cash investment.

Case 3: A woman in the same village as the above man, visited the same Mbuti camp with 420 zaires of groundnuts and some cassava flour at the end of August. Five glasses of groundnuts, equivalent to 100 zaires in Teturi, were exchanged for a unit of blue duiker. Over ten days, she obtained only one blue duiker, and the remaining groundnuts (equivalent to 320 zaires) were used as debt. The blue duiker was sold for 400 zaires. Because she did not return to the forest camp until the Mbuti had left, it is unlikely that she will recover the debt from the Mbuti. It can be said she lost 20 zaires at this time.

Case 4: Another Bira man from the same village, tried to buy meat for cash at the forest camp in August. He bought three blue duikers and two hind legs, which cost 200 and 150 zaires, respectively. He sold the meat for 400 zaires for a blue duiker and 300 for a hind leg, and obtained 1,800 zaires altogether. The gain was 900 zaires.

In the case of barter, extra work is required by the trader to pound dried cassava into flour and to carry the goods to the forest camp. Even if such extra work is taken into consideration, the barter rates seem to be more advantageous to the traders than the cash rates. However the demand for and supply of credit has to be kept in mind. Even if the catch is so poor that the bulk of flour is left unexchanged, it is considered to be a disgrace for the traders to carry the flour back to the village without allowing credit. Thus, the actual rates of barter fluctuate considerably depending on the catch. When the catch is good, the traders can make a large profit, 1,900 zaires from 700 zaires invested, as shown in Case 1. But when the catch is poor, they may even lose their money, because they are often requested to allow credit which will not be cleared.

Generally speaking, the traders can make some profit from the meat trade. The question arises as to why the Mbuti themselves are not engaged in the meat trade. The first reason is that it may not be morally acceptable to the Mbuti to profit from their kinsmen among whom the norm of generalised reciprocity is prevalent. The Mbuti, especially when there is no trader at their camp, carry the meat by themselves to the villages in order to exchange it with the villagers. But, this is mainly to get agricultural food for their own consumption and not to make a profit from the exchange of the meat obtained from their kinsmen. The second reason is their strong interest in the present. When there is something which attracts their interest before their eyes, they have difficulty suppressing their interest. This prevents them from carrying the meat to the villages to sell it, even if they could get a better return by doing so. The third reason is based on the nature of their historical relationship with the outside world. For a long period they have been making contact with the outside world only through their village patrons. Even today, the Mbuti usually make their base camps on the edge of the villagers'

fields, one or two kilometres away from the main roads and villages, thus reducing the chance of direct contact with passers-by. Few of the Mbuti in Teturi have ever been to Beni, Butembo, or Bunia. When they want something which is available only in the towns, for example a hammer or a file, they ask the villagers to buy it for them. By not selling meat at the markets and towns, they seem to deliberately avoid direct contact with the wider world.

Intensification of hunting

Involvement in the meat trade has intensified hunting because meat has become something more than food which satisfies their own requirement and that of their patron villagers. Hunting in order to acquire exchange value is quite different from traditional subsistence hunting. For their own consumption, they usually hunt within a range of several kilometres from the base camp near the village. When the traders come to exchange meat, however, they move to the interior of the forest, sometimes 20 km or more away from the villages where the game is more abundant, in order to get a better catch.

The commodities sought in exchange for meat are generally expensive. The 2,000 g of cassava flour, exchanged for a unit of blue duiker, contains about 6,750 kcal, which is equivalent to only 3 to 4 person-days of consumption. That is, it is consumed in one day by a family of average size. If the Mbuti carry the meat to the villages, the same amount of meat can be exchanged for about 15 kg of raw cassava which yields more than 18,000 kcal, or about 2 to 3 times as many calories as the flour. Since as much as 60 to 70% of the Mbuti's caloric intake depends on agricultural food even at a hunting camp [ICHIKAWA 1986] they have to spend long periods hunting to get these calories, especially when they mainly get the calories from traders visiting the camps.

The average day's catch of exchangeable duiker portions by a family is 0.5 to 0.6 units (calculated from the data in Ichikawa [1986]) which means that a Mbuti family has to spend about 10 days hunting to get the 5 units of meat for a loin cloth. This contributes to the intensification of hunting because it is meat that cannot be used for cassava flour. In the hunting season, the Mbuti now go out almost everyday except when it rains, and spend as many as 7 to 8 hours a day hunting on the average [TANNO 1976; ICHIKAWA 1983]. Their working hours are thus nearly twice those reported for many other subsistence hunter-gatherers [LEE 1968; WOODBURN 1968; TANAKA 1980; HAYDEN 1981] and they can no longer be said to live in "an original affluent society" [SAHLINS 1974] with extensive leisure time.

However, when they are at the basecamp near the village, they do not work so hard except when the villagers ask the Mbuti's help for intensive agricultural work. At the base camp, the women usually spend several hours at the villager's fields to get farm food, whereas the men are not engaged much in food-related activities, except when they go out for hunting to get meat for their own consumption.

According to Sahlins, material wants are generally kept at a low level in

subsistence hunter-gatherer societies. In the Ituri Forest, however, the inflow of trade goods, such as colourful clothes and delicious food stimulates the Mbuti's desire for these commodities. When most Mbutis have obtained loin cloths, the traders bring shirts, trousers or sandals and try to stimulate further consumption. As these commodities are generally very expensive, the Mbuti can hardly satisfy their desires, even if they hunt almost everyday from morning till evening.

Change in ownership and sharing practice

Among the Mbuti, trapped animals belong to the owner of the net in which it is entangled. When the animal is butchered, it is first distributed to the people who have contributed in some way to the catch. For example, the one who helped to kill the animal takes the meat around the chestbone, the one who carried the animal to the camp takes a front leg, the one who hunted with another's net takes a hind leg (the net owner takes the remaining three legs), and so on [HARAKO 1976; TANNO 1976; ICHIKAWA 1983]. Apart from such obligatory distribution, it is, according to the Mbuti, the owner who decides whether or not the meat is further distributed, or to whom it is distributed. However, when the meat is consumed at the camp, it is usually shared with other band members. As a rule, the owner lets someone else butcher the meat and pretends to have no interest in it. The meat is quickly distributed to the people who are designated by the owner beforehand and to the people who gather around the butchering site. Those who have received the meat further distribute it to others who have nothing, either voluntarily or on demand. All the band members get at least some meat through such an extensive sharing practice, unless the catch is too small to be distributed to everybody. In the past no one would monopolise the meat (or other food) when others had little or nothing so an owner had no more than a nominal or symbolic right over the meat, although its distribution might involve micro-political or psycho-sociological problems of prestige. Individual ownership may be best understood, therefore, in terms of giving expression to social relationships, which would otherwise be obscured by the cooperative nature of consumption.

Such an extensive sharing practice is still observed in respect of meat consumed at the camp. The shared meat, however, is mainly comprised of the heads and intestines, immature animals and small animals of less than 3 kg, which together account for only a half of the catch in weight. Other parts of animals which can be exchanged for trade goods are rarely distributed, except to those to whom the owner has some special obligation. The owner in this case has a substantial right over the meat, and even his father cannot direct its distribution.

The exchangeable parts of animals may be consumed at the camp, particularly when the catch is poor. The meat can also be exchanged at the villages for raw cassava which will yield many more calories than does exchange with the traders at the forest camp. If it is exchanged with the trader, either for cloth or small quantities of rice or flour, only a small number of people (mainly the owners' own family) can be satisfied. Further commodities obtained from the traders are not so

extensively shared as the meat and raw cassava. In this situation, the owner stands at the crossroads: he must choose either the common interests of his band or his own individual interests. While other band members have a keen interest in his decision, no one shows it explicitly but tension is obvious in the owner on such an occasion.

When the owner exchanges his meat for trade goods in his own interests, the individualisation of the Mbuti is promoted, even if it is accompanied with some psycho-sociological tension. Individualisation is also observed in the consumption of food. Traditionally, the food is prepared by each family, and brought to the *tele*, the central hearth, where all the men eat communally [CHIKAWA 1978; HART 1979]. The women also distribute food to one another [CHIKAWA 1978]. There is no great difference either in quality or in quantity of the food taken by each family but through the frequent sharing and communal eating, they reduce considerable fluctuation in the food supply at the individual family level [CHIKAWA 1983].

This individualisation has a serious effect on such an interdependent subsistence system. In the eastern part of the Ituri Forest where meat trading is most prevalent, food sharing is generally limited to the close kinsmen of the owner, such as his parents, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters and parents-in-law. The men in this area do not eat communally, but separately at their own family hearths. As the individual catch varies considerably, they must meet the fluctuation in the food supply by other means than sharing with one another. The frequent request for credit from the traders by the Mbuti may be understood in this regard. It is not only a manoeuvre to make the exchange more advantageous to the Mbuti, but also serves as a new way of accommodating the variability of the catch. The credit system thus seems to weaken band integration because of its effects on the traditional sharing network.

As individualisation proceeds, various conflicts are occurring among the Mbuti which may weaken band integration as the following example shows. One day in the hunting season, a Mbuti woman drove the game in the wrong direction. Her husband's net was set near the open end of the net enclosure at that time. When she found an animal (a medium-sized duiker) passing by her husband's net toward the interior part of the net enclosure, she secretly went ahead of it and tried to drive it back toward her husband's net. Unfortunately she failed and the animal escaped from the open end of the enclosure. If she had let the animal proceed toward the interior part, it would have been caught by someone other than her husband. While every Mbuti woman is always aware of the position of her husband's net and tries to drive the animals toward it, this woman went too far. She was subsequently criticised for her selfish behaviour by all the men who had participated in the hunt.

If the people had not been involved in the meat trade, such a situation would not have occurred because the game would have been distributed to the other band members. In the past ownership of the game did not make much differences in economic terms. However, now that the meat can be exchanged for beautiful

cloths and highly valued food it has become a scarce commodity which is greatly wanted by everybody. The individualisation process may endanger the close cooperation of the band members which is indispensable to net hunting.

Impact on band composition

The meat trade also influences the group formation of the Mbuti. Most Mbuti men have their own hunting nets, which are brought together to carry out a hunt. However, there are some who have no net, or only a short net which is usually tied together with another net for use in hunting. As one man can efficiently handle a net, there are usually more men in the band than are necessary to carry out the hunt. In addition children and old people do not participate. Such dependents account for 40 to 60% of the band members (Table 5) (see also Ichikawa [1978]). If the Mbuti are aiming at maximising profit from the meat trade, they will try to form hunting groups with the least number of these extras and dependents.

Mbuti bands are not, however, simply formed on such economic principles. They are not primarily an economic unit formed to promote economic efficiency but are social units whose members are connected mainly through close patrilineal kinship (for the details see Tanno [1976] and Ichikawa [1978]). The formation of hunting groups is therefore influenced by these conflicting economic and social factors: maximisation of advantage in trade pulling in one direction while traditional social ties and practices pull in the other.

The modification of the band composition according to economic principles can be observed to varying degrees in the formation of different types of hunting groups in the Teturi region. The most common type of modification is that not all the families join the hunting group, some remain at the base camp near the villages. In this type of modification, no considerable difference is found in the dependency ratio between the band and the hunting groups, the only difference is in the group size (Band A and B in Table 5). In the second type of modification, the hunting group is reduced mainly to effective producers with the majority of dependents as well as "extra" families remaining at the base camp (Band C and D). While family

Table 5. Composition of the bands and hunting groups, 1975.

Band	Effectives*		Dependents*		Total		Effectives' ratio	
	Band	Hunting Gr.	Band	Hunting Gr.	Band	Hunting Gr.	Band	Hunting Gr.
A	35	27	44	34	79	61	0.44	0.44
B	35	28	32	17	67	45	0.52	0.62
C**	42	16	35	7	77	23	0.55	0.70
D***	55	31	39	2	94	33	0.59	0.94
E	30	30	25	25	55	55	0.55	0.55

*: the effectives comprise those between approximately 15 and 60 years of age who usually participate in the net hunting.

** : $0.1 < p < 0.2$

***: $p < 0.001$

ties are maintained in the first type they are separated in the second type, which is really a kind of task oriented group. When I asked the Mbuti about the reason for leaving their children at the base camp, they replied it was because the children would often suffer from hunger in the forest camp. This suggests that they are trying to trade as much meat as possible, sometimes even by reducing their own consumption. From time to time the whole band does still move to a hunting camp (Band E), leaving the base camp empty leading to the reassertion of social ties over individual family benefit.

CONCLUSION

The contact of the Mbuti with other societies dates back many centuries. Originally they formed a so-called symbiotic relationship with the Bantu and Sudanic cultivators. In this relationship, the Mbuti provided the cultivators with game and labour, and received in return farm food and iron implements. In ecological terms, it functioned as an interdependent system between the hunters and cultivators, or more precisely, between the protein producers and energy (calories) producers [CHIKAWA 1986]. As the importance of wild vegetables as an energy source decreased, the Mbuti came to more or less specialise in hunting. We do not know whether the Mbuti were originally only hunter-gatherers or whether they have always practised some cultivation in the forest prior to contact with the Bantu or Sudanic cultivators. However, it is mainly due to such a system of role differentiation and interdependence that the Mbuti have remained hunter-gatherers in spite of the long history of contact with cultivators. The economy of the Mbuti in this period was, however, restricted mostly to interaction with the regional economy.

The Mbuti first experienced contact with a market economy in the late 19th century through the ivory trade. By the early 20th century, they had become famous for their elephant hunting, which marked their first venture into market hunting. However, even in this period, ivory was traded by the villagers and the contact of the Mbuti with the market economy was mediated by their village patrons. The economic exchange between the Mbuti and the villagers still took place mainly in a social or pseudo-kinship framework.

It was not until the late 1950s to early 1960s when the meat trade and agricultural intensification began that the Mbuti had direct contact with a money economy for the first time. As their hunting products and labour became the objects of direct commodity exchange, the traditional symbiotic or patron-client relationship was weakened. Today, the Mbuti play an important role in the regional economy of the Ituri Forest as the providers of a protein source (meat) and a labour force needed for agricultural intensification.

The two important items provided by the Mbuti in the present economic system of the Ituri Forest, meat and labour, were the basic economic elements in the traditional patron-client relationship with the villages. This was based on a social

framework of gift-giving but now, the same items are exchanged as commodities, which is to say that they are handed over within a framework of balanced reciprocity. Moreover, hunting and agricultural labour are now intensified by the Mbuti who more or less specialise in one of these activities. Thus, market hunting and wage labour (paid either in cash or in kind) can be considered to be the intensified and specialised form of the economic role followed in their traditional symbiotic system³).

Through meat trading the Mbuti have become involved in the Zairean economy with its rapid rate of inflation. In this unstable economy, they have been able to maintain a stable exchange rate to obtain various commodities by depending on barter instead of cash sales, in spite of the increasing prevalence of a cash economy. With the barter of meat or labour service paid in kind, the exchange rates are not subject to a rise in cash price and in the short term, the rates are not influenced, at least nominally, by supply and demand. Such stable exchange rates may be determined by the local sense of balance between the exchange partners, which is in turn based on the traditional value system. Moreover, it is not the profit itself but the use value, the consumer goods which directly satisfy their demand, that the Mbuti want to acquire. This makes it unnecessary for the Mbuti to acquire cash, as long as these goods can be obtained through barter. Even when they want cash, it is for some specific purpose, for example, to pay taxes, fines, or bridewealth. They do not show a strong interest in cash itself for its general purchasing power.

Barter markets are reported in other parts of Zaire as for example, between the river fishermen and the cultivators [ANKEI 1985]. This is not surprising considering the high inflation rate in the Zairean economy and the concern with use value. Thus bartering in the Ituri Forest should not be taken as the remnant of an older type of commodity exchange prior to the cash sales, but understood in terms of the important role it plays in the present unstable Zairean national economy.

Influenced by the commoditisation of meat, fundamental changes are taking place in Mbuti society. Such changes include intensification of hunting, strengthening the owner's right over the meat, reduction of sharing practice and change in hunting group composition.

Murphy and Steward [1956] pointed out in a now classic study on acculturation that a similar acculturation process was found among two societies in different environments and with different modes of livelihood. In both societies, subsistence activities and local handicraft production declined in proportion to the increased concentration on the production of specialised commodities and an increased dependence on trade goods. In both societies, individualisation proceeded with the family becoming the main social and economic unit, and the population becoming assimilated to a wider society owing to the destruction and disintegration of the indigenous culture and community.

3) The specialisation in the exploitation of forest resources (e.g. meat for trade) should also be noted [ICHIKAWA 1986].

In the Mbuti case, even before the introduction of meat trading, their major source of carbohydrates was farm food obtained from cultivators. It cannot be said, therefore, that they have become significantly less dependent on wild vegetables since the introduction of meat trading. However, they now spend less time in collecting their favourite wild fruits, nuts and mushrooms at the forest camp where the traders are present, owing to the intensification of hunting activities. A considerable change has occurred in their clothes. The traditional clothes of the Mbuti were made from the bark of fig trees and vines, but they are now rarely seen in the Teturi region where commoditisation of meat and labour have been promoted. Factory-woven cloths were first taken up for their personal beautification and as luxuries but they are now necessities without which the Mbuti feel a sense of shame, just as in the case of Mundurucu in South America [MURPHY and STEWARD 1956]. The traditional barkcloths and the elaborately woven belts (*wakutu*, made of palm and other forest plants) are now made only occasionally by the Mbuti in the Teturi region. These changes are certainly similar to those cases cited by Murphy and Steward.

There are differences in the process of change among the Mbuti from those predicted by Murphy and Steward. The Mbuti still depend on the traditional hunting technology rather than the traps of steel wire mainly used by the villagers. A few shotguns were introduced very recently into this region by wealthy villagers for hunting monkeys after the liberalisation of gold mining, but the Mbuti do not use modern hunting technology. They cannot afford to buy the new technology which would enable them to hunt individually. This serves partly as a barrier to the excessive development of individualisation. Individualisation has been accelerated however and the economic role of the family has become more prominent, through the strengthening of an owner's rights over meat, the reduction in sharing and the decline of men's communal eating in some areas.

The composition of residence groups shows some tendency towards change. Most of the Mbuti bands in the Teturi region are essentially composed of kin-related families with the core members connected through patrilineal kinship [TANNO 1976; ICHIKAWA 1978]. However, in the area where the meat trade is undertaken most actively, they sometimes form hunting groups which have very complicated kinship composition, although this is a temporary group and breaks up at the end of the hunting season [ICHIKAWA 1978]. Such a composite hunting group is formed by the individual families or small clusters of families who choose their hunting group on the basis of the degree of access it will provide to trade goods, neglecting at least temporarily, the kinship ties which were traditionally the basis of band composition.

It is interesting to speculate on how far such a tendency to individualisation will proceed, certainly for as long as the Mbuti continue to carry out collective net hunting, it will not proceed to the extent that most of the Mbuti families freely choose the group of their residence, or to the extent that food sharing is limited to the nuclear family. Whether the Mbuti will perhaps take some counter measures

against this process, for example, reinforcing the bonding of males who are connected through patrilineal kinship, or practising more frequent sharing between families is uncertain. But as Feit [1982] pointed out in a study of Cree society, hunter-gatherers are not simply passive receptors of external forces of change and may seek to control it. Mbuti involvement in meat trading is only recent, and upto now it still remains socially embedded despite the changes.

The family itself was always an important social unit even before the introduction of meat trading. It has always been based on a nuclear family (or a polygamous family in some cases) with its own hut and family hearth set in front of it. While the members of a family are usually dispersed during the daytime for hunting and other activities, at night they gather to sleep in their respective huts. The food distributed to individuals is collected and cooked together by each family, then it is distributed again to family and other members of the band [ICHIKAWA 1978]. The Mbuti family thus forms a centre for collection and dispersion of food and individuals. Intensified meat trading has been responsible for the transformation of the family from a primarily social unit to an increasingly independent economic one.

Through meat trading and wage labour, the Mbuti may be gradually incorporated into the Zairean national economy. Access to various commodities may help the Mbuti to acquire some sense of belonging to the Zairean nation. However, at present, they seem to exist within a sort of enclave in the Zairean nation-state. This is exemplified in their two "price" system. One is influenced, at least partly, by the economy of a much wider society, while the other is based on the local and traditional value system and primarily concerns the acquisition of use value. The persistence of barter transactions in a society where the cash economy is rapidly prevailing cannot however be explained only in economic terms of ensuring a stable exchange rate in an unstable national economy. It also has a socio-political implication in that it may serve as a barrier to the penetration of the market economy with a consistent and unified value system⁴⁾. As long as this barrier exists, the Mbuti society will not disintegrate totally or be completely assimilated into Zairean society.

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4) Perhaps partly for this reason, the barter markets in some areas of Zaire were suppressed by the Colonial government before independence (see Ankei [1985]).

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