

## NOTES ON THE DISTRIBUTION AND SETTLEMENT PATTERN OF HUNTER-GATHERERS IN NORTHWESTERN CONGO

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**ABSTRACT** This report describes the distribution, population, and residential pattern of hunter-gatherers in the Sangha Region, of northwestern Congo. The author identified five linguistic groups of hunter-gatherers: the Baka (Bangombe), Mikaya, Baluma, Bambenjele, and Bakola. Almost all these groups in the study area built sedentary settlements along roads or on the banks of a river and tended their own fields. They still engaged in hunting, and considered to be hunters by themselves and by the neighboring farmers. In the Souanke District in the western part of the Region, 664 Baka lived in 15 settlements. The data on birth place suggest that the Baka in the area originally had a close relationship with the Baka in Cameroon. Some Baka informants said that there were a total of 22 Baka settlements in the Sembe District in the center of the Region. In the Mokeko District in the eastern part, the author confirmed 25 settlements, and another 11 settlements were counted by the local informants. The inhabitants of these settlements included all five linguistic groups. Several cases of fission and fusion of Baka settlements with farmer villages in Souanke demonstrate the socio-economic relationships between the two groups.

Key Words: Baka; Hunter-gatherer; Congo; Residential pattern; Distribution.

### INTRODUCTION

A dense, humid forest spreads over the vast central part of Africa. Many hunter-gatherers, who have generally been called the “pygmy,” live in this forest. Despite their wide distribution, they have some common physical and cultural features. The small stature and the reddish-brown body distinguish them from their neighboring farmers. They are excellent hunters who adjust themselves to their forest environment and have developed various hunting techniques. They can even kill a big elephant with a spear. They also are well known as masters of music and dance.

Of these hunter-gatherer groups, a large group inhabits southwestern Central Africa, southern Cameroon, and northern Congo. According to Cavalli-Sforza (1986), this group has a population of about 33,000 and is one of the two major groups of forest hunter-gatherers in Africa. Another group is the Mbuti, in the Ituri Forest (Turnbull, 1965; Harako, 1976; Tanno, 1976; Ichikawa, 1978). Recently, French (Bahuchet, 1985; Brisson & Boursier, 1979; Thomas & Bahuchet, 1981; Thomas & Bahuchet, 1983) and American (Cavalli-Sforza, 1986) research teams conducted anthropological studies on this hunter-gatherer group. Their study areas covered mainly Central Africa and Cameroon, but not yet, the northern Congo.

The author conducted two field surveys in the Sangha Region in northwestern Congo: the first from August to November 1987, and the second from October to December 1990. This brief report, mainly based on the data from the first survey, will describe the distribution and population of hunter-gatherers in the Sangha Region.

## STUDY AREAS AND METHODS

The study area is shown in Figure 1. The Sangha Region consists of Ouesso, the capital of the Region, and the Districts of Mokeko, Sembe and Souanke. The author investigated the distribution, population, and subsistence activities of hunter-gatherers, from August to October 1987, in the Souanke District which bordered on Gabon and Cameroon. In this field survey he visited all the hunter-gatherer settlements and obtained data regarding name, age, sex, and birth place of almost all the members. Subsequently, he conducted a short survey in Ouesso and the Mokeko District in November. This survey covered the area from Ouesso through the Liouesso village, 80 kilometers to the south, and the Bomasa village, about 80 kilometers to the north. However, the limited amount of time did not enable the author to visit all the hunter-gatherer settlements. The information on hunter-gatherers in the Sembe District and some areas of the Mokeko District

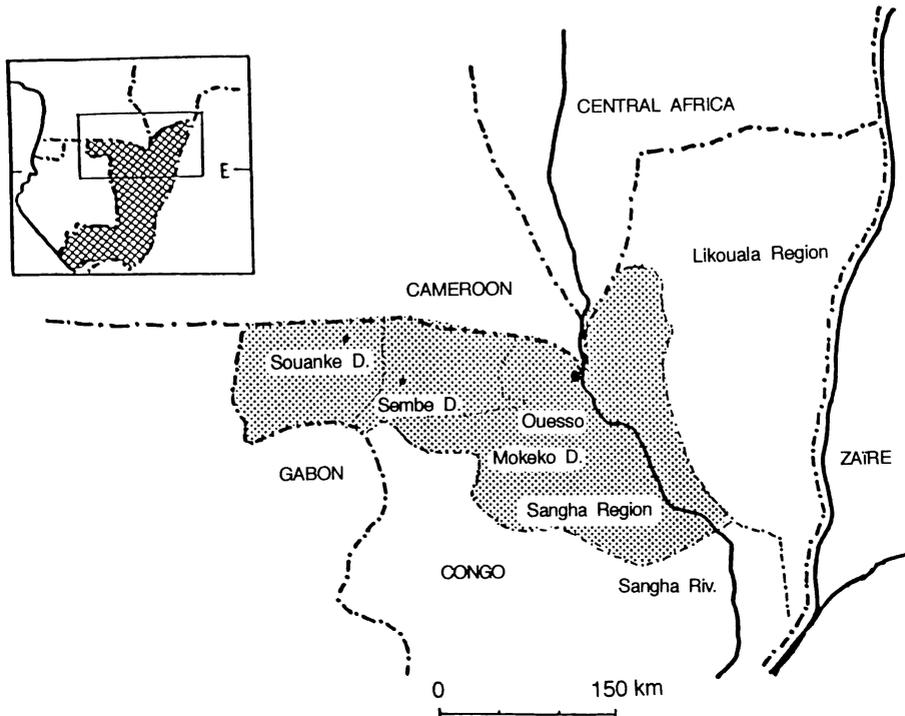


Fig. 1. Study area.

which were not visited was given by both hunter-gatherer and farmer informants.

In the present paper, the word, "settlement," will be exclusively used to describe the assembly of hunter-gatherer houses constructed along a road or on the banks of a river. On the other hand, the assembly of farmer houses will be referred to as a "village." As will be described later, hunter-gatherer settlements are similar to the farmer villages, both in appearance and in characteristic of sedentariness. But their life styles differ, regarding social, economic, and cultural aspects. Therefore, the author differentiates between the "villages," and the "settlements" to emphasize the distinctions in their life styles. The word, "camp," will be used to describe the assembly of hunter-gatherer huts built in a forest when hunting.

The vegetation in the study area with have an annual rainfall of about 1,800 mm, can be divided into three types. The first is the artificial, which includes fields and their fallows along the roads connecting the villages. The second is the marsh forest of the flooded zone. The last is the semi-deciduous forest in an interfluvial zone. The latter two are primary forests.

Many farmer groups inhabit the Sangha Region as well as hunter-gatherer groups. These groups include the Sanghasangha, Bongiri, Bakota, Mokiba, Mbouku, Bapomo, Bomasa, and Kwele in the Mokeko District, Kwele in the Sembe District, and Kwele, Jem, and Fan in the Souanke District. All of these groups, except the Bomasa, of the Adamawa-Eastern linguistic family, belong to the Benue-Congo family (Greenberg, 1970).

## HUNTER-GATHERER PEOPLE IN NORTHWESTERN CONGO

### I. Population

The existing population of hunter-gatherers in the Sangha Region is not clear. According to the census of the regional government of 1984, the Sangha Region had a total population of 46,367, consisting of 12,031 in Ouessou, 14,112 in the Mokeko District, 10,706 in the Sembe District, and 9,518 in the Souanke District (Table 1). The population density of the Sangha Region was 0.83 persons per square kilometer. Although the above population included that of the hunter-gatherers, their numbers could not be established. The census by the Rev. J. R. Gouothas of Sembe in the 1960's indicated the hunter-gatherer population to be

**Table 1.** Population in Sangha region of northwestern Congo.

District	Area occupied (km <sup>2</sup> )	Total population <sup>(1)</sup>	Density (person/km <sup>2</sup> )	Number of hunter-gatherers <sup>(2)</sup>
Sangha Reg.	55,800	46,367	0.83	10,684
Ouessou		12,031		
Mokeko D.	34,500 <sup>(3)</sup>	14,112	0.76 <sup>(4)</sup>	5,596
Sembe D.	8,800	10,706	1.22	4,000
Souanke D.	12,500	9,518	0.76	1,088
				664 <sup>(5)</sup>

(1): Census by the local government in 1984, (2): Cavalli-Sforza (1986), (3): Ouessou is included, (4): The population of Ouessou is added, (5): Census by the author in 1987.

5,596 in the Mokeko District and 1,088 in the Souanke District. The local authorities estimated the population in the Sembe District at 4,000 (cited from Cavalli-Sforza, 1986). The census in the author's first survey in 1987 estimated the hunter-gatherer population in the Souanke District to be 664, much less than that of the above reverend's census. The reason for this discrepancy is not yet clear.

## II. Linguistic Groups

A large hunter-gatherer group living in Central Africa, Cameroon, and Congo is divided into two linguistic groups: Aka and Baka. The former inhabits southwestern Central Africa and northeastern Congo, and the latter southeastern Cameroon and northwestern Congo. These two hunter-gatherer groups can hear and speak the languages of their neighboring farmers. In addition, they have their own languages which they borrowed from the farmers, with whom they had kept a close relationship in the past. The Aka language is part of the Benue-Congo family, and the Baka language, of the Adamawa-Eastern family. The Baka in southeastern Cameroon, however, is likely to have used their own distinct language (Letouzey, 1976). Moreover, as for the Baka language, there is an interesting question regarding the language of the Ngbaka farmers. The Ngbaka living in the southwestern part of Central Africa, have close social contacts with the Aka, but none with the Baka. Yet, their language is similar to that of the Baka [In this respect, Bouquiaux and Thomas (Bouquiaux & Thomas, 1980: cited in Cavalli-Sforza, 1986) presented a hypothesis on the historical relationship between the Baka and the Ngbaka].

Several hunter-gatherer groups which are linguistically different from each other dwell in northwestern Congo. These groups call themselves the Bangombe, Bambenjele, Baluma, Mikaya, and Bakola, respectively. Among these groups, the present report mainly deals with the Bangombe. Whereas the Bangombe call themselves Baka, the other groups do not refer to them as Baka, but as Bangombe.

The distribution range of these different linguistic groups are as follows: the Baka (Bangombe) in northwestern Congo, mainly from Ouessou to the Sembe and Souanke Districts; the Bambenjele, on the left bank of the upper Sangha River; the Baluma, along a road toward the south of Ouessou and on the right bank of the lower Sangha River; the Mikaya, from Ouessou to the regional border along the above-mentioned road; and the Bakola, over the border of Gabon and Congo on the south of the Souanke District.

According to the informants intermarriage among these groups seemed to occur frequently, though the author observed only a few instances. It is not yet known how these groups, other than the Bangombe, relate linguistically and historically to the Baka or Aka groups. As for the Bakola, judging from their ranges, it is possible that they are affiliated with the Bagiweli who inhabit the western part of Cameroon.

The term Bambenga or Babinga, which so far in ethnographic literature was used to call the hunter-gatherers in and around the author's study area, was exclusively employed by the farmers, and not by the hunter-gatherers themselves. Therefore it will not be used in the present report.

### III. Outline of Subsistence Economy

In order to understand the present situation of the economic life of the hunter-gatherers in northwestern Congo, the subsistence economy of the Baka in the Souanke District will be briefly described below.

At present, the Baka clear the forests to make their own fields, and cultivate such crops as cassava tuber, plantain banana, sugar cane, maize, etc., though not as much as their neighboring farmers. It was reported that most Baka people in the Sembe District engaged in the cultivation of cacao trees as a cash crop (Guillot & Diallo, 1976).

The Baka still hunt. Men of the Baka normally conduct one-day hunting trips, using shotguns or snares, and occasionally go away hunt for two or three weeks. In the case of elephant hunting, they often stay in a remote forest for several months. Presumably the Baka in the western part of the Sangha Region have never used nets for hunting, whereas the Baluma and Mikaya in eastern Sangha still use them. The Bakola also seem to have nets. Since none of the Baka own shotguns, they usually go to hunt with the guns and ammunition which farmers entrust to them. In such cases, hunters give their games to their patron farmers and receive payment in money or crops. Moreover, they keep some of the remaining ammunition for the purpose of obtaining meat for their own consumption.

The Baka actively engage in gathering wild yams, insects, honey, etc. Among all foods collected, especially wild yam that Baka women go out to collect once or twice a week, is one of the most important foods used as a dietary energy source.

Apart from these food-getting activities, part-time jobs such as clearing trees by men and planting or harvesting by women in the farmers' fields, building farmer houses, and collecting building materials are also important economic activities. These activities are their main means of acquiring money or crops.

## LOCATION OF THE HUNTER-GATHERER SETTLEMENTS

Recently in northwestern Congo, hunter-gatherers form their settlements along a main road or on the banks of a river, as farmers do. They also live in rectangular houses with clay walls like the farmer houses. The appearance of the hunter-gatherer settlements is somewhat similar to that of the farmer villages. One could not determine whether a cluster of houses is a hunter-gatherer settlement until he finds, by chance, a somewhat small-sized rectangular house, or a traditional hemispherical or oval hut therein.

Next, the author will describe the geographical distributions of the hunter-gatherer settlements in northwestern Congo which the author was able to determine either by visiting directly or interview.

### I. Souanke District

There were 15 settlements in the Souanke District (Fig.2). In Souanke town, the capital of the District, there were two settlements, Gomani (S1) and Bam II (S2).

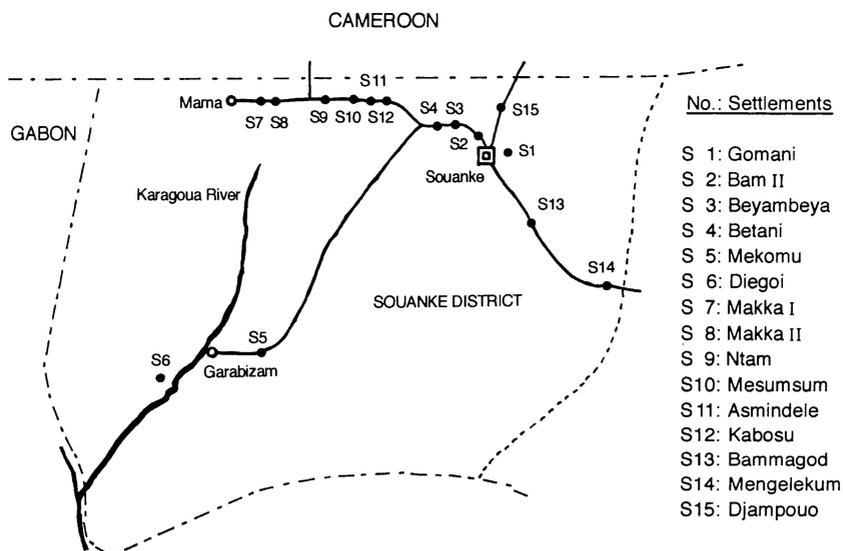


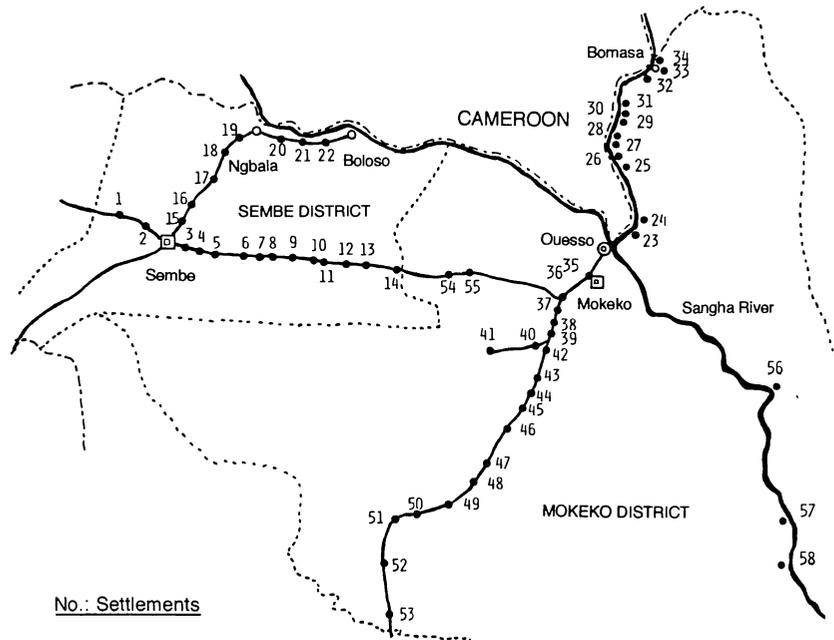
Fig. 2. Location of the hunter-gatherer settlements in Souanke District.

There were two settlements, Bammagod (S13) and Mengelekum (S14), along the road from Souanke town to the Sembe District and a settlement, Djampouou (S15), along the road from Souanke town to Yaounde city, in Cameroon. Along the road parallel with the border of Cameroon, there were two, Beyambeya (S3) and Betani (S4), between Souanke town and the crossroads about 20 kilometers west. There were six, Kabosu (S12), Asmindele (S11), Mesumsum (S10), Ntam (S9), Makka I (S7), and Makka II (S8), from the crossroads to Mama village west. In addition, there were two, Mekomu (S5) and Diegoi (S6) around Garabizam village southwest far from the crossroads. Diegoi, a settlement constructed within a forest far from villages, was a base camp for elephant hunting. But it was not just a temporary camp for hunting. There were inhabitants who had no settlement elsewhere.

Almost all the hunter-gatherers living in the Souanke District were Baka. In this area, farmers related socio-economically to the Baka included three ethnic groups; the Kwele, Jem, and Fan. Souanke town was inhabited by the Kwele and the Jem, the south part of the District mainly by the Kwele, and the north area near the border of Cameroon by the Jem and a few of the Fan. Most Baka understood and spoke the languages of their neighboring farmers, whereas few farmers were able to understand the Baka language.

## II. Sembe District

As for the hunter-gatherers in the Sembe District (Fig.3), which the author could not visit, the information on the location of their settlements was acquired from a Baka man who had come to Beyambeya settlement from the Sembe District to pay bridewealth. The geographical positions on the figure were confirmed by another man from the Sembe District in 1990. According to the informants, 22 settlements



No.: Settlements

Sembe District

1: Bomodelu(G)	16: Mgbola(G)	29: Bamou(B)	44: Ouessombila(L)
2: Zoulabout(G)	17: Ajala(G)	30: Mbandaka(B)	45: Lobo(L)
3: Galasu(G)	18: Mogola(G)	31: Kabo(B)	46: Manjala(?)
4: Nyabi(G)	19: Zouba(G)	32: Bounda(G)	47: Liouesso(M,L)
5: Demeayo(G)	20: Moposa(G)	33: Bomasa(G)	48: Ibonga(M)
6: Badekok(G)	21: Menjamu(G)	34: Zambashiya(G)	49: Mokoko(M)
7: Baa(G)	22: Boloso(G)	35: Mokeko(G,B,M,L)	50: Mouyoi(M)
8: Menjanja(G)		36: Keta(M)	51: Mokuwangonda(G,M,K)
9: Boutazabou(G)		37: Kandeko(M)	52: Lango(G,M)
10: Biesu(G)		23: Gatongo(B)	53: Epoma(M)
11: Komu(G)		24: Ganjigolo(B)	54: Zoulabout(G)
12: Goa(G)		25: Kunda(B)	55: Paris(G)
13: Luma(G)		26: Gbakenji(B)	56: Ikelemba(B)
14: Seka(G)		27: Sokiolingi(B)	57: Molanda(?)
15: Ndola(G)		28: Neme(B)	58: Pikounda(?)
			43: Monbanga(L)

( ): indicates linguistic groups to which major members belong;

G: Bangombe, B: Bammenjele, L: Baluma, M: Mikaya, and K: Bakola

**Fig. 3.** Location of the hunter-gatherer settlements in Sambe and Mokeko District.

along three roads diverging from Sembe town, the capital of the District, were counted in all. As shown in Figure 3, there were two settlements along the road to Souanke, 12 along the road to Ouessou, and 8 along the road to Boloso. The hunter-gatherers in this area belong to the Baka group. Although a small group of Bakola seem to have recently immigrated about Sembe town from Gabon, it was yet to be determined. The farmers in the District are Kwele.

### III. Mokeko District

There were 19 settlements of hunter-gatherers between Ouessou and the regional border along the road to the south (Fig.3). Among these settlements, 13 settlements from Mokeko (No.35) to Liouesso (No.47) were observed by the author. The other six settlements from Ibonga (No.48) to Epoma (No.53) were located based on the information of several farmer and hunter-gatherer informants. The inhabitants of these settlements consisted of four hunter-gatherer groups: the Baka, Mikaya, Baluma, and Bakola. According to the Baka inhabitants of Attantion (No.40) and Lengoue (No.41), the Baka had never lived from here to the south of the District until their ancestors moved to this area thirty or forty years ago for the purpose of engaging in jobs on the oil palm plantation or building roads. The Bakola also seem to have moved here more recently from Gabon. There were two settlements of the Baka along the road from Keta (No.36) to the Sembe District and many hunter-gatherer settlements along the Sangha River. When the author went up the Sangha River by boat from Ouessou to the north border, he observed 12 settlements of the Baka or Bambenjele on the left bank. None could be found on the right bank. As for the hunter-gatherer settlements along the lower Sangha River from Ouessou, those (Nos. 56, 57 and 58) which the author believed to exist are shown in Figure 3.

The 33 settlements from No.23 to No.55, except for those along the lower Sangha River, can be linguistically classified into two types: (1) the uni-linguistic type, where almost all the inhabitants consist of one linguistic group, and (2) multi-linguistic type, where the inhabitants consist of two to four groups. The former type included 28 settlements: 7 of the Baka, 9 of the Bambenjele, 5 of the Baluma, and 7 of the Mikaya. Five settlements fell under the latter type. Although among these five settlements the composition of No.46 could not be determined, the other four were composed of: the Mikaya and Baluma (No.47), Baka and Mikaya (No.52), Baka, Mikaya and Bakola (No.51), and a combination of all except Bakola (No.35).

As far as the author observed, Attantion, which had a population of over 300, was the largest settlement in the Sangha Region. This was established by the Baka people from various quarters who moved here to work at the oil palm plantation nearby many years ago. Moreover, the author heard of another large Baka settlement (No.55) similar to Attantion. It is likely, however, that most hunter-gatherer settlements in the study areas have 20 families at the most.

There are also many farmer groups in the Mokeko District. The Kwele and Bongili dwell mainly in the northwestern part of the District and the Banjimo, Bapomo, and Bomasa on the left bank of the Sangha River in its northeastern part. It is possible that in the southern part of the District, the Bongili, Mokiba, Bakota, and Mbouku live along the road to the south from Ouessou, and the Bapomo and Sanghasangha farther downstream along the Sangha River.

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE BAKA IN THE SOUANKE DISTRICT

The author recorded the name, sex, approximate age, marital status, and birth

place of almost all the members of every hunter-gatherer settlement in the Souanke District in the previous survey. Whether or not a person was a legitimate member of the settlement was determined following the opinion of some influential persons in it. The findings will be described below.

The total number of inhabitants of the 15 settlements in the Souanke District was counted at 664 (Table 2). Due to the missing data on the spouses and children of five men, the real number might amount to around 680. Each settlement size varied from a minimum of 7 to a maximum of 112, and averaged about 44.

Except for 14 children whose sex the author failed to check, the total number of 650 consisted of 320 men and 330 women. The hunter-gatherers in this area are not commonly interested in their birth date nor have such identity cards as farmers carry, on which one's birth date is required information. Therefore, the author himself estimated their age by direct observation and reliable information and classified them into three age classes : child, adolescent, and adult. The child class included all boys and girls under about 12 years of age, the adolescent class, unmarried persons from about 13 to about 16, and the adult class, married persons under 16 and all persons over about 17. As shown in Table 2, the number of adults and adolescents together were 190 (59.4%) men and 214 (64.8%) women, and that of boys and girls were 130 (40.6%) and 116 (35.2%), respectively.

The lineage system of the Baka is patrilineal and the residential pattern of married couples is virilocal. The marriage sets of the 141 recorded included 131 monogamous types and 10 polygamous, all of which consisted of one husband and two wives.

The birth places of the 305 adults (75.5% for all adults) are shown in Table 3. Of the 305 Baka adults, 173 (56.7%) were born within the Souanke District and 132 (43.3%) were immigrants from other areas. The sex ratio of these immigrants was 1 : 1. Except for one Baka woman born in Gabon, they could be roughly divided into two groups based on their birth places. One was the Cameroon group, with

**Table 2.** The number of the hunter-gatherers in Souanke District (1987).

No. in Fig. 2	Settlement	Population				Total	
		Men	Women	Boys	Girls		
S11**	Asmindele	1	2	1	3	7	
S12	Kabosu	5(1)	2	3	4	14	
S8	Makka II	5(2)	5(1)	4	4	18	
S14	Mengelekum	6(2)	8(3)	4	4	18	
S9	Ntam	4	3	8	4	19	
S5	Mekomu	6	11		7*	24	
S6	Diegoi	10(2)	10	1	7*	29	
S2	Bam II	12(2)	12(3)	5	5	34	
S10	Mesumsum	12(2)	10(1)	10	8	40	
S15	Djampouo	15(2)	18(1)	11	12	56	
S7	Makka I	19(2)	21(3)	7	11	58	
S4	Betani	18(4)	20(3)	14	12	64	
S13	Bammagod	23(4)	29(5)	18	14	84	
S3	Beyambeya	20(1)	27(3)	24	16	87	
S1	Gomani	34(8)	36(3)	24	18	112	
		190(32)	214(26)	130	14*	116	664

( ): adolescent, \*: sex unknown, \*\*: arranged in order of number of members.

**Table 3.** The birth places of adult inhabitants of each Baka settlement in Souanke District.

Birth place	Settle						
	Mekomu	Diegoi	Makka I	Makka II	Ntam	Masumsum	Asmindele
Souanke District							
Mekomu							
Makka I		11(6)	20(12)	1(0)	1(0)		
Makka II			1(0)	2(1)			
Ntam		2(1)	8(3)		3(2)		
Mesumsum					1(1)		
Asmindele						5(2)	
Betani							
Beyambeya							
Djampouo							
Bam II							
Gomani			1(0)				
Bammagod							
Others	3(3)	2(1)			1(0)	5(2)	3(1)
Sub-total	3(3)	15(8)	30(15)	3(1)	6(3)	10(4)	3(1)
Others							
Cameroon	2(1)	3(1)	3(2)	5(3)		4(3)	
Sembe & Mokeko							
Gabon		1(1)					
Sub-total	2(1)	4(2)	3(2)	5(3)	0	4(3)	0
Unknown	12(2)	1(0)	7(2)	2(1)	1(1)	8(5)	
Total	17(6)	20(10)	40(19)	10(5)	7(4)	22(12)	3(1)

There was no information that any Baka people were born in Diegoi, Kabosu, or Mengelekum. ( ):

61 persons born in Cameroon. The other was the Congo group, with 70 born in the Sembe or Mokeko District of Congo. The distribution of the two groups in the Souanke District was different. The people coming from Cameroon were widespread as they lived in 12 Baka settlements among a total of 15 in the Souanke District. On the other hand, the people of the Congo group dwelled in only 7 settlements. Furthermore, these 7 settlements were located only near or within Souanke Town but not along the road parallel with the Cameroon border to the west. This difference in the distribution suggests that while native Baka in the Souanke District and immigrants from Cameroon originally belonged to the same group, the Congo group recently came from the East. Gomani settlement (S1) in Souanke town was inhabited by many people of the Congo group. This settlement was established by the people who were called together by a churchman about thirty years ago. Even before the establishment of Gomani settlement, the immigrants might have come from the east, from the Sembe or Mokeko District, but it is more likely that the population of the Congo group in the Souanke District has increased since then.

### SPACING BETWEEN BAKA SETTLEMENTS AND FARM VILLAGES

Baka settlements in the Souanke District can be classified into two types based on their spatial proximity to the farmer villages. One is the separate type: that is, the settlement, built at some distance from the nearest farmer village, and the

ment								Total
Kabosu	Betani	Beyambeya	Djampouo	Bam II	Gomani	Bammagod	Mengelekum	
		1(0)						1(0)
	1(0)			2(2)				36(20)
		1(1)	1(1)	1(0)				3(1)
			1(1)					16(8)
1(1)	6(5)			1(1)	1(0)			2(2)
	1(0)							14(9)
		1(1)	1(0)			1(0)		1(0)
		1(0)	7(4)		5(1)	13(7)	2(1)	3(1)
		1(0)						29(13)
			1(0)		9(5)	1(0)		1(0)
	1(0)	3(0)			1(0)	13(10)		12(5)
2(0)	2(1)	1(0)	5(2)	6(3)		3(0)	4(3)	18(10)
3(1)	12(6)	9(2)	16(8)	10(6)	16(6)	31(17)	6(4)	37(16)
								173(85)
1(1)	7(5)	25(16)	2(1)	3(1)	5(2)	1(0)		61(36)
	6(3)	4(1)	6(3)	1(0)	34(17)	14(5)	5(1)	70(30)
								1(1)
1(1)	13(8)	29(17)	8(4)	4(1)	39(19)	15(5)	5(1)	132(67)
3(3)	13(4)	8(1)	9(3)	10(6)	15(9)	6(1)	4(1)	99(39)
7(5)	38(18)	46(20)	33(15)	24(13)	70(34)	52(23)	15(6)	404(191)

women.

other, the contact type, built at the end of or within a farmer village. As shown in Table 4, the former involved 8 settlements and the latter 7. In the former type, the average distance between each Baka settlement and the nearest farmer village was approximately 1.3 km except for two settlements, the distance of which could not be measured.

Such spatial relationships as described here, however, are by no means fixed. For instance, when the author visited Ntam (S9) and Betani (S4) in 1987, the both inhabitants were just founding the new respective settlements separately from the farmer villages. The both former settlements had been adjacent to the farmer villages a few months before. On the contrary, both Mesumsum (S10) and Bammagod (S13), separated formerly, have converged on the farmer villages since 1987. Moreover, three farmer families lived at the end of the Beyambeya settlement (S3) in 1990, though no farmer had been there in 1987.

Traditional houses in the African humid tropics, which are built with small timbers, leaves, and clay do not have strong durability. When new ones have to be made, both the hunter-gatherers and farmers often move the entire settlement. In addition, when a misfortune befalls a settlement, all the members sometimes decide to leave. It is probable, however, that some of the above cases of fission and fusion occurred not as a result of rebuilding houses or misfortune, but as a result of the socio-economic relationship between the Baka and the farmers.

When the author surveyed the Souanke District, many farmers told him that the Baka people should live together with them. On the other hand, when the Baka

**Table 4.** Distance between Baka settlement and the nearest farmer village.

No. in Fig. 2	Baka Settlement	Farmers of the nearest village	Distance (km)
S2	Bam II	Kwele	0
S7	Makka I	Jem	0
S10	Mesumsum	Jem	0
S11	Asmindele	Jem	0
S12	Kabosu	Jem	0
S13	Bammagod	Kwele	0
S15	Djampouo	Jem	0
S1	Gomani	Jem, Kwele	1.7
S3	Beyambeya	Jem	1.5
S4	Betani	Jem	0.8
S5	Mekomu	Kwele	0.5
S9	Ntam	Jem	2.7
S14	Mengelekum	Kwele	0.8
S6	Diegoi	Kwele	(3-5 hrs by boat)
S8	Makka II	Jem	?

people spoke their mind, they indicated they had a desire to live separately if possible from the farmers. Baka-farmer relationships in the Souanke District is considerably different from the intimate and personal relationships of Mbuti-farmers in the Ituri Forest (Ichikawa, 1982), or Aka-farmers in Central Africa and the eastern part of Congo (Bahuchet, 1985; Takeuchi, 1991). The author often observed farmers coming to the Baka people to seek helpers in making fields or hunting. The Baka undertook the errands if they were satisfied with the terms of payment, but refused politely, if not satisfied. Thus, the characteristic of Baka-farmer relationships in the Souanke District is temporary and businesslike. Except in the case of elephant hunting, fixed relationships between groups or individuals can be rarely kept for a long time. Because the population of farmers who seek helps is overwhelmingly larger than that of the Baka in this area, the latter have an advantage over the former in the negotiation. The status of the Baka is socially lower. Farmers identify themselves to be leaders and patrons of the Baka. There are many farmers who look down upon the Baka people. Farmers, however, cannot economically slight them, so they make efforts to establish a stable relationship with them. Living together with the Baka is profitable not only socially, but also economically for the farmers. On the other hand, the Baka prefer to live separately, as they can exercise free choice. It is likely that such expectations of the two groups influence the spatial relationship between the settlements of both groups.

## CONCLUSION

In northwestern Congo, except on the left bank of the Sangha River, hunter-gatherers constructed sedentary settlements along the roads as farmers did and mostly engaged in slash-and-burn agriculture. The hunter-gatherers have abandoned their former mode of living, i.e., foraging in the forest, which was of great importance for their sustenance. With respect to social change, the author has sug-

gested elsewhere that introduction of guns could be one factor (Sato, 1991). This change seems to indicate that hunter-gatherers in this area will eventually transform themselves into farmers. But the author doubts that they should become entirely farmers in the near future. For example, most of the Baka in the Souanke District tend their own fields, but do not completely rely on it. They actively engage in hunting and gathering, and selectively become temporary workers for merchants, farmers or in alluvial mining, etc. Furthermore, neighboring farmers still regard them as hunters or useful helpers, but not as true farmers. Above all, the Baka themselves take pride in being a forest people and do not necessarily persist in agriculture.

However, electrical appliances such as cassette tape recorders and other various attractive commodities have appeared on the market. Even the forest people see cars or even planes. As Ichikawa (1991) described the commoditisation proceeding in the Mbuti area, the social change of African forest hunter-gatherers is rapid and universal. The present socio-economic situation will not allow them to maintain their role as traditional hunters or a forest people. The Baka would prefer to wear beautiful and colorful clothes and to have a cassette tape recorder to provide dance music on demand. For the sake of these attractive goods, it is natural if they elected to engage in as favorable a job as possible. They might, however, engage in various jobs not only because of the social circumstances, but also because of the flexible lifestyle as hunter-gatherers. The basis of their living presently seems to waver between the village (farmer world) and the forest (hunter world).

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