

Strategic Young Researcher Overseas Visit Program for Accelerating Brain Circulation

Dispatch Report

Year: 1 August 2014~8 September 2014

Place of fieldwork: Ethiopia

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- Research background

People in Asia and Africa have invented many utensils and tools that are used on a daily basis to adapt to the natural environment, enhance social relationships in communities, and influence the outside world. This research contributes to the development of a sustainable human sphere in Asia and Africa by describing the process by which local knowledge related specifically to the body and bodily techniques, the domain that is most vulnerable to changes in global conditions and social institutions, is shared and disseminated.

- Research purpose and aim

The focus of this research includes the following three components: 1) fieldwork in Southwestern Ethiopia; 2) academic collaboration with the South Omo Research Center and Museum (SORC&M) at Addis Ababa University as well as with local communities, such as the South Omo People's Ensete Research Center (SOPERC); and 3) academic exchanges related to the results of my research at international conferences. In this trip, I will focus on the first and second components.

- Results and achievements by fieldwork

It is possible to examine the process by which the group organized ensete fiber production and how group members have accepted and modified the ensete fiber production techniques because I have recorded this continuously for the last two and half years. The process of acceptance and modification and the knowledge of ensete production could not be separated from the people's social practices and their knowledge. From this perspective, this study achieved almost all of its objectives. In addition, at the 2nd special exhibition, I hope to meet with staff of South Omo Research Center and Museum (SORC&M). Although I cannot attend the inauguration ceremony for the 2nd special exhibition in SORC&M, I am sure that the staff at SORC&M will be able to attend the second special exhibition.

- Implications and impacts on future research

This research trip will be my last trip to Ethiopia during this program. The coming international symposium in February, for which I plan to organize a small session, is one of the most important outputs of this research. At this symposium, I would like to discuss several situations in which local knowledge is emerging in a globalized context. One goal that I did not achieve during this research was that I could not be present as one of the organizers of the coming special exhibition in SORC&M. I would like to include information on how fieldworkers contribute local knowledge as part of the museum exhibition. I would like to include my experiences with academic exchange in Ethiopia and Germany in the coming symposium.



Photo1. The new techniques I: dyeing the fiber red by using red onionskin



Photo2. The new techniques II: Drying the red color paper made from ensete fiber under the sun



Photo3. The new techniques III: Members use the selected materials from ensete leaves to produce ensete rings.