

## Field Station: An Apparatus That Integrally Promotes Education and Research

One of the great traditions of research in Kyoto University is its positivist approach. Our emphasis on on-site research based on fieldwork has enabled us to come up with unique paradigms. The graduate school to which I belong considers fieldwork the heart of education and research, and mainly aims at integrating and promoting first-line field research with educational activities. In order to do so, it is necessary for teaching staff and students to conduct research and think together in the research field in Asia and Africa. The Field Station (FS) is an important apparatus for achieving this.

An FS can be set in a room rented in a local research institution or a private house, or it can be a small house built near research sites (Photo 1). These places are equipped with such facilities as the internet connection, dictionaries and encyclopedias, to provide suitable environment for researchers to prepare for fieldwork, assess collected materials, and host seminars (Photo 2). Our graduate school and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies collaborated for the 21st Century COE\* Program "Aiming for COE of Integrated Area Studies," which was implemented in 2002 and lasted for 5 years. The program contributed to establishing

FSs in nine locations in Asia and five locations in Africa. From 2007, the Global COE Program, "In search of sustainable humansphere in Asia and Africa", will further expand this function.

One benefit of education that uses an FS is that graduate students can learn based on concrete examples through intensively sharing their fieldwork experiences with teaching staff. We call this on-site education. Another benefit of an FS is that graduate students can identify their problems by organizing materials of ongoing research and holding seminars. In so doing, the students can reorient the direction in which their fieldwork is heading. Finally, it is important for graduate students to interact and discuss more with local researchers and graduate students through using an FS, in order to develop multifaceted points of view.

I myself set up an FS in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. While helping with its management, I promoted fieldwork in Kenya and Uganda. It was a small apartment whose size was about 2 bedroom apartment, but



Photo 1. The Cameroon Field Station is a local style cottage built in a tropical rainforest

this FS had an immeasurable impact on the development of education and research. I could live with students and discuss research with them, and invite local researchers and field informants in order to deepen our interaction (Photo 3). It is worth noting that all the FSs have become important research centers for the wider research community, including staff and students from other departments of the university and external organizations as well. Kyoto University could benefit greatly from taking full advantage of these FSs in its promotion of internationalization strategies.

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\*COE: Center of Excellence

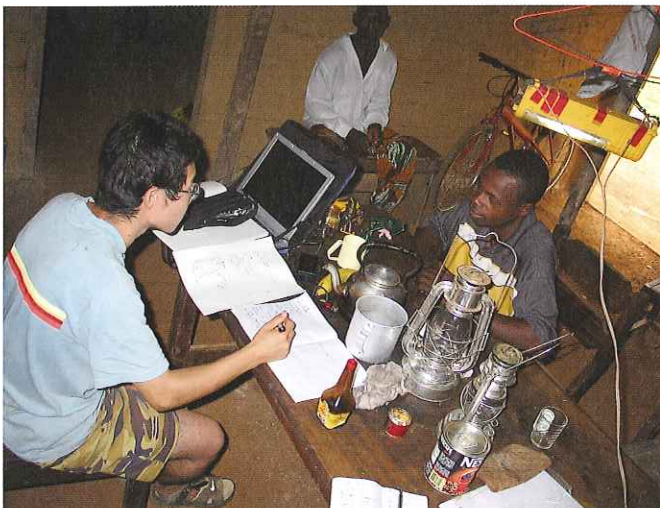


Photo 2. Solar panels generate electricity for the Cameroon Field Station

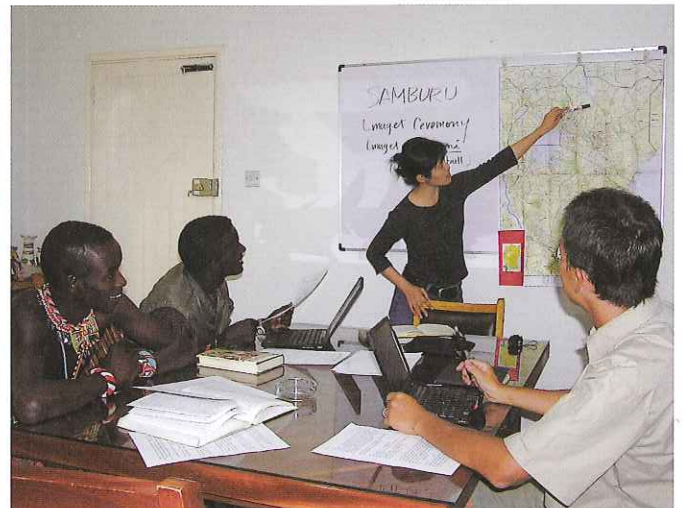


Photo 3. A seminar hosted at the Nairobi Field Station, in cooperation with local people