



Editorial to the special feature: Franco-Japanese collaboration in primatology

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Published online: 11 June 2016
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Like most other fields of science and technology (Wagner 2006), primatology has seen rapid and continuing growth in studies conducted by multiple researchers working collaboratively, both *in situ* and by data sharing and correspondence. A recently published paper describing one aspect of behavior in wild chimpanzees has 80 authors based in ten different countries! The absolute and relative number of multi-authored papers on primates has risen massively since the early days of primate research. A quick comparison of the contents of the earliest and the most recent volumes of *Primates* illustrates this change. The two issues of volume 1 (published 1957–1958) contain 15 articles, every one written by a single author, of which 14 are Japanese and one is non-Japanese. By contrast, the four issues of the most recent volume (vol. 56, 2015) contain 40 articles (including “News and Perspectives”), of which only seven (17.5 %) are single-author papers.

A closer look reveals the increasing impact of international collaborations on our discipline. Of the 33 jointly authored papers in *Primates* vol. 56, thirteen (39 %) list authors from institutions within the same country. More striking is the fact that 20 papers (61 %) have authors who are based in institutions in different countries. Japanese primatologists are well represented in these international

efforts, with 30 % of these papers including at least one author based in a Japanese institution.

The sharing of ideas, information and observations between Japanese primatologists and their colleagues from other nations goes back to at least the early 1960s. The Japan-India Joint Project in Primates Investigation led to the first publication on primates co-authored by scientists based in Japan and another nation (Sugiyama et al. 1965).

Several authors have discussed how bi-directional visits and interactions, starting in the 1950s, and more recently joint research projects, have impacted both on western and Japanese primatology (Asquith 2000; de Waal 2003; Matsuzawa and McGrew 2008). This issue of *Primates* includes several papers that highlight collaborative projects between Japanese researchers and colleagues from the francophone primatological community. It is just over 400 years since a Japanese samurai and ambassador initiated contacts between Japan and France. Since then there has been a long series of diplomatic, industrial, cultural and scientific exchanges between the two countries that continues today. In this context it is worth briefly mentioning some aspects of the history of primatology in the two countries.

Japan, of course, has its own indigenous nonhuman primate population; although France has none, many of its former colonies in Africa and Asia contain diverse species of primates, and these have long attracted the attention of Japanese primatologists. Chimpanzees at Bossou, studied almost continuously by Japanese primatologists since 1976, were actually described decades earlier by the French naturalist Maxime Lamotte, when Guinea was still a French colony. However, it would be more than five decades before the publication of an article jointly authored by Japanese and French scientists concerning Bossou. The Primate Society of Japan (PSJ) was established in 1985,

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just 2 years before the establishment of the Société Francophone de Primatologie (SFDP); both societies are associated with scientific journals devoted to the study of primates: *Primates*—the oldest primatology journal—and *Revue de Primatologie*, respectively.

The conservation of species and their habitats is a core concern for both PSJ and SFDP. This is particularly reflected in three of the papers in this special feature. Nicolas Granier summarizes the findings of recent surveys on the southern slope of the Nimba Mountains in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, describing important fallback foods, selectivity of tree species used for nesting, and presenting evidence for two distinct communities of chimpanzees in this area. He also emphasizes the increasingly international nature of the research activities conducted in the Bossou-Nimba region since the study site became well established and more accessible in the mid 1980s (Matsuzawa et al. 2011). Vincent Leblan also addresses the issue of “community conservation” in the Bossou region. He draws on historical accounts of chimpanzee and elephant populations, and local narratives obtained by himself and Japanese colleagues to argue for the importance of animals’ symbolic properties for indigenous peoples when drawing up conservation plans. Recent demographic changes and a resulting shift in local people’s attitude toward the Bossou chimpanzees is identified by Tatyana Humle as a potential threat to the chimpanzees’ continued existence, along with the threat of iron-mining development in the nearby Nimba mountains. Humle surveys work done by herself and others on various factors that reveal the close inter-relationships between ecology, social processes and cultural variations in chimpanzee behaviors including tool use and manual laterality.

The two remaining papers concern studies on the species that is at the very core of collaborative studies between western and Japanese primatologists, namely the Japanese macaque. Cédric Sueur and Marie Pelé describe their work

on the populations on Koshima and Yakushima, showing that individuals that have central positions in social networks are more likely both to transmit pathogens to others and also become infected more quickly than more peripheral individuals. Further social network analyses revealed insights into demographic processes and social play relationships in gelada baboons and chimpanzees, respectively. Jean-Baptiste Leca and co-authors provide an overview of innovative and culturally learned behaviors in Japanese macaques, including feeding on novel food, dental flossing, stone handling, and non-conceptive sexual behavior. In each case, the quality of the social relationship between the individuals involved appears critical.

We hope that this special feature will provide the opportunity for scientists to look back at the collaboration between Japanese and Francophone primatologists. This issue will also address the future of international collaboration to promote the scientific understanding and conservation of the nonhuman primates.

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