Field research on sustainable forest management in northern Thailand by utilizing *Arenga westerhoutii*

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- Introduction

In Thailand, growing concern to ban logging and conserve forests grew after the flood tragedy of 1988, because the importance of forests in watershed conservation was recognized. Thus, many sanctuaries and national parks were built in northern Thailand, that had rich forests and formed the source of water for central Thailand. The management of these areas, however, was highly centralized without any consideration for the life of the local people who have used these areas before they were enclosed.

- The necessity to understand the local life and forest use

To clarify the relationship between the local forest use and the ecological state of forests, a sugar palm, (*Arenga westerhoutii*) that grow in forests (Fig. a, b), was selected as the study material. *A. westerhoutii* is distributed throughout Thailand and its endosperms are widely consumed in Thailand (Fig. c, d). Northern Thailand is the main source of these endosperms, which is harvested and sold by the locals. The aim of this study is to investigate the local use of *A. westerhoutii* and ecological state of forests in order to help the locals as well as to design strategies for sustainable management of forests in Thailand.

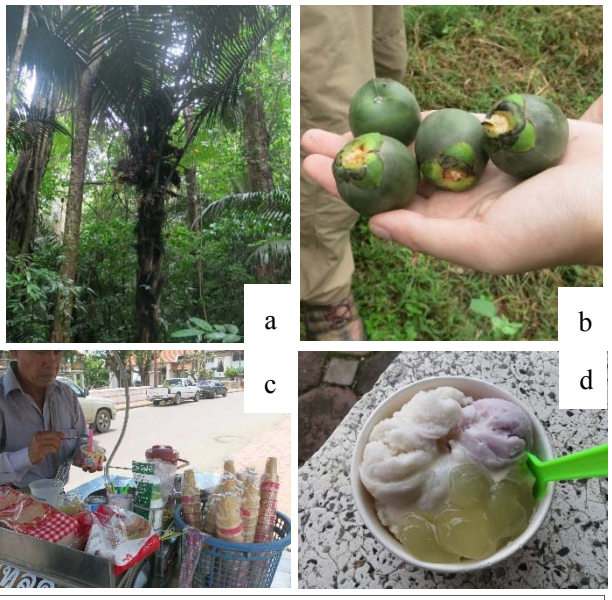

Fig. a, b) *A. westerhoutii* in forests and its fruits ; c, d) an ice cream selling man made an ice cream with endosperms

- Mountainous villages in Nan Province, northern Thailand

The study site comprises mountainous villages in Nan Province, northern Thailand. Nan can be reached in a two-hour flight from Bangkok – It takes a few hours of travel by road to reach the villages. –

The locals of these villages cultivated upland rice, maize, and cassava in forests and developed lychee and coffee

orchards (Fig. e, f, g). They generated high income from these agricultural products. In addition, they harvested the endosperms of *A. westerhoutii* growing in forests and gained supplementary income by selling them.

Fig. e) various land use activities in the forests; f) maize fields adjacent to the forests; g) different tree species in the forests

- Future research

The results of this study would provide basic information for future research on these forests and well as for their sustainable management. In addition, it is important to know the local language in order to acquire concrete information from the local people.