



## Of trees and men: new insights into man-environment relationships in the moist forests of Central Africa during the late Holocene

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## PHD ABSTRACT

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In Central Africa, vegetation history has been documented by palaeoenvironmental studies (especially palynology) that have mainly been concerned with the ways in which climate has shaped the forest landscapes. Human impacts in this region have been hardly studied so far, especially at a local scale. The main objective of this thesis is to propose an approach based on archaeology and the use of charred botanical remains found in soils, either wood charcoal or seeds, in order to document Holocene anthropogenic impacts on the forest structure and composition. When coupled with the diachronic analysis of human activities, these land-use biomarkers can allow a better understanding of the relationship between man and his environment in Central Africa during this period. The first part of the thesis introduces the conceptual framework and the materials and methods used during the research. Constituting the core of the work undertaken, its second part then presents the chronology of human activities in the northern Congo Basin, the use of biomarkers to discriminate between these activities, either domestic or agricultural, and the effect of recent anthropogenic activities on the dynamics of several light-demanding tree populations. Finally, its third part draws out the main recommendations of the work and formulates potential avenues for additional research.

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