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Caves and karst of the Congo Republic, Central and Northern Gabon

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Caves and karst of the Congo Republic, Central, and Northern Gabon is a valuable book providing useful information for planning scientific and cave explorations in African karst areas. The author collected a large number of references throughout the speleological literature and the information reported in this book could be considered a kind of Baedeker (i.e., travel guide) concerning the caves of these areas. For this reason, in this review, the cave names are reported to provide more information to speleologist directly interested to caving in this African region. An overview of the cave exploration from the 1950s to the 2000s is reported. The geology and archaeology of the region are described providing fundamental details. With reference to the Congo Republic, in the area of the Niari Basin and Hangou Massif, the locations of the following caves are reported: *Grotte de Diboueta*, *Grotte de Camp CCAF*, *Grotte Kounanga*, *Grotte de N'Zimou*, *Grotte de Micogny or M'Congny*, and *Grotte de M'Bouca*. Reference of papers concerning some other caves are also reported. A map of an area between Loudima and Kimongo in the Niari Basin gives the location of *Grotte de Doumboula*, *Grotte N'tari-Moundele*, *Grotte de Ferme Richard*, and *Grotte du Viaduc*. In addition, papers concerning caves close to the confluence of the Niaru and Loubetsi rivers are listed. A short description of a few of them in this area, namely No. 1, No. 13 (*Buffalo Tunnel*), No. 14, No. 52, No. 61, No. 63, and No. 65 were published in *Annales de Spéléologie*, volume 16, issue 2, p. 157-174.

In the area between Loudima and Kimongo, data on the following caves are listed: *Grotte de Loudima*, *Grottes de Mallembé*, *Grotte du Viaduc*, *Grotte de Ferme Richard*, *Grotte N'tari Moundelé*, *Grotte de Doumbonia*, and *Grotte Kississi*. In the mid-Niari Valley (north of the river) a map with the location of the following caves is reported: *Grotte de Kila-N'tari*, *Grotte de Baukoussou*, *Aven de effondrement NtadiNdinga*, *Grotte de Boas*, *Grotte de Kioudi*, *Perte de Mboumba*, *Resurgence de la Moumba*, *Grotte di Kicongo*, *Grotte de Kikounou*, *Grotte de Ntadi Ba Ntie Ntie*, and *Perte de Ngouete*. Data are also reported for the following caves: *Ntadi Oubouka*, *Grotte de Bankoussou*, *Grotte de la Louati*, *Trou du Gendarme*, *Grotte de Kila-N'tari*, *Grotte de Kila-N'tari* (with cave map), and *Resurgence of the Kila*, *Grotte de Boas*. For the same valley (north of the river), other caves are listed with some description: *Grotte L'Allemagne*, *Grotte de Niadi Ba Ntie Ntie*, *Aven de effondrement Ntadi Ndinga*, *Grottes de Kiéni*, *Roche Percée*, *Grotte de Ngaba Ngolo*, *Grotte de Kikongo*, *Grotte de Kioudi*, *Grotte Kikounou*, *Ntadi Yomba*, *Niadi Ku Maluende I-III*, *Perte de Mboumba*, *Resurgence de Mboumba*, and *Perte de Ngouete*.

In the region around Bouansa, the following rock shelters are described: *Ntadi Kimwanga*, *Ntadi Hele*, *Ha Mambwana Ma lutete*, *Ntadi Bi Gnumba*, and *Ntadi Hungu*, whereas in the mining region of the Niari Valley, only two caves are cited: *Grotte Galerie* and *Une Grotte à double issue*.

Many limestone caves in the Massif of Foret de Bangou (a map containing their locations) are reported: *Grottes de Matouridi*, *Grotte Mpassa*, *Grottes de la Lougoulou*, *Grotte Yengo*, *Grottes Missouri I & II*, *Grotte de Mvounda*, *Grottes Meya I, II & III*, *Meza Village*, *Meza III*, *Grotte de Nzao – Grotte M.Zac*, *Grotte Bernard*, *Unnamed Cave*, *Grotte de Ngabe Nzoke*, *Grotte Bittori*, *Grotte Laboratoire de Bittori*, *Grotte de Meza Nzouari* (with cave map), *Grotte Paul*, *Grottes de M'Poka I & II*, *Grotte de Malala I-II*, *Grottes Bimbi*, *Grotte Gilbert*, *Grotte Pierre*, *Grotte Rigobert*, *Grottes de Moussa*, and *Grotte Kimanika*.

The following caves are quoted in reference to bats colonies: *Grotte "Apollinaire"*, *Grotte Bitiba*, *Grotte Bouaboumpo*, *Grotte Founta*, *Grotte Malonga Marc*, *Grotte Mamfini*, *Grotte Mazabata*, *Grotte Mibangou*, *Grotte Missanvi*, and *Grotte Mountembessa*.

An area with possible karst phenomena is mentioned north of Brazzaville.

In Gabon, both coastal and central areas are considered. The following caves are recorded: *Grotte de Mabagna*, *Grotte de Boloukouboé*, *Grotte de Ngtoum*, and *N'Toum Quarry*. In the area north of Fernan Viaz-Kamba Plain & Olandé River the following caves are documented: *Grottes de Mugumbi/Réseau de Mugumbi*, *Grotte des Minioptères*, *Grotte Dinguembou*, and *Réseau de Lembé*.

In the Paleoproterozoic area of Central Gabon, a map showing the caves around Lastoursville is included along with the following caves: *Grotte Lihouma*, *Grotte de N'Doumbou or de Lastoursville (cave map)*, *Grotte de Missié*, *Grotte de Tao Tao*, *Grotte de Koubou*, *Grotte de Siyou 1 and 2*, *Grotte de Pahou*, *Grotte de Pahou 2*, *Grotte Youmbidi*, *Grotte de Mabelo*, *Grotte de Boukama*, and *Grotte de Ngongourouma*.

In conclusion, *Caves and karst of the Congo Republic, Central and Northern Gabon* is an excellent reference guide to any speleologist and/or cave explorer interested in studying and exploring the region.

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