

## II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### 2.1. Research Site: general situation

Given the easy access to health statistics, the demographics of the study area are presented according to the territorial division of health. The study area is located in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ituri province, Djugu territory, Rethy health zone (population: 149 472 inhabitants) and Linga health zone (144 179 inhabitants). The area is on the edge of the Lendu Plateau (Fig. 2), a large mass of 410 000 ha, with altitudes ranging between 1700 and 2455m, and located at the northern end of the Albertine Rift, west of Lake Albert in the northeast of the DR Congo. It is bordered to the north by Uganda, while its oriental part is punctuated by a series of mountains of which Mount Aboro (2455m) is the highest and located in the Linga health zone.

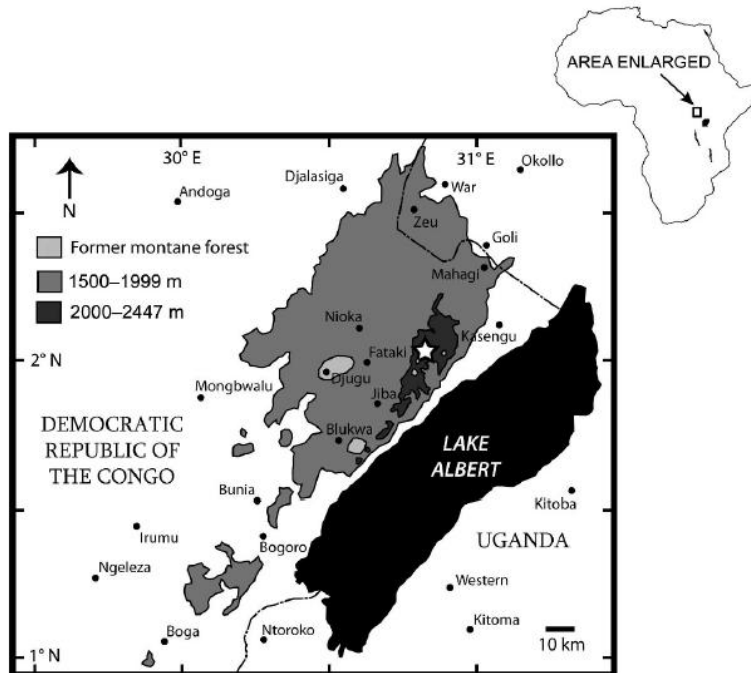


Figure 2. Plateau Lendu and former forest cover from Vrijdagh 1949 (Source: Greenbaum et al, 2012).

The Lendu plateau is now totally deforested and mostly covered with agricultural land and grassland with scattered trees; it was covered till the 70s by a dense mountain forest above 1500 m.

When planning the expedition, we arbitrarily named the various forest fragments or blocks as FG1, FG2 and FG3 (Fig. 3). The FG1 block is located in the village of Ndeke 3, in the Rethy health zone and the FG2 block is located in Nzerku village in the Linga health zone. At the administrative level, the explored area is shared between two population groups, the Ndeke and Buba. A smaller fragment also persists to the east of the FG1 block or Bbai forest, and is called the Zabu group; but this area has not been explored.