Offprint of the article

‘Are the African Pygmies an ethnographic fiction?’

by Roger M. Blench

pp. 41-66

N.B. The bibliography in this volume is a
composite, so I have printed the references
separately from the original computer file.
CENTRAL AFRICAN HUNTER-GATHERERS
IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE:
CHALLENGING ELUSIVENESS
KAREN BIESBROUCK / STEFAN ELDERS / GERDA ROssel / EDS.
The origins of the Khoisan peoples remain poorly understood.

The Khoisan peoples, who are divided into two main groups: the Khoi and the San, have a long history of interaction with other cultures. The Khoi are commonly known as the "Khoisan" and are the original inhabitants of southern Africa. They were hunter-gatherers who lived in small groups and were highly mobile.

In terms of their physical characteristics, the Khoisan peoples have long been the subject of intense study due to their unique anatomical features. Researchers have attempted to determine whether these differences are indicative of a genetic relationship between the Khoisan and other populations. However, the results of these studies are not conclusive, and the question of the relationship between the Khoisan and other groups remains open.

Recent genetic studies have suggested that the Khoisan populations are more closely related to the indigenous populations of other parts of Africa than to the modern Khoi. This finding supports the idea that the Khoisan groups are the descendants of a more ancient population that migrated into southern Africa from the north.

In conclusion, the origins of the Khoisan peoples remain a topic of ongoing research and debate. While some aspects of their history are well-documented, there is still much to be learned about their origins and their role in the development of southern Africa.

References:


Further reading:

Bahai,/kg this shared lesson for a survival. The manuscript U-language of the pyramids. There seem to be several problems with this. The most prominent is that the language is not clearly defined, and there is a lack of evidence to support the claim that it was written in the language of the pyramids.

The manuscript U-language is a complex system of symbols and characters that is not easily translatable. It is believed to have been used for religious purposes, but the exact meaning and purpose of the manuscript is not fully understood.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the pyramids were built by a group of people who spoke a language that was related to the ancient Egyptian language. The manuscript U-language is believed to be a form of this ancient Egyptian language, but it is not clear how closely related the two languages are.

Another issue with the manuscript U-language is that it is not widely recognized among experts in the field of ancient Egyptian studies. There is a lack of consensus among scholars about the origin and meaning of the symbols and characters used in the manuscript.

Despite these challenges, the manuscript U-language remains an important piece of evidence for understanding the history and culture of ancient Egypt.
whether they exploited the rain forest from its margins or lived in the forest cannot be determined.

c. Biological arguments: Genetics

The biological literature has tended to argue that the pygmies are an ancient and separate race (Hirnaux 1968). The most detailed examination of the biological genetic evidence for the origin of African pygmies is Cavalli-Sforza (1986). Despite a considerable sample of rain forest groups the results are ambiguous. A primary result is the separateness of the Khoisan. Cavalli-Sforza et al. (1994:175, 180) say "The San differ from other sub-Saharan Africans 0.1082 ± 0.0140 that is, more than any sub-Saharan group differs from any other" and the "San show no special association with pygmies more than that with other sub-Saharan Africans."

In the analysis of the pygmy data the populations are divided, rather unsatisfactorily, into three groups:

- Mbuti = Eastern pygmies
- Aka = Western pygmies
- pygmoids = all other pygmies including the Cameroon groups, the Rwandese "Twa and those of NW Congo (Bakati?)

Of these groups only the Mbuti show any striking result; the others are so affected by "admixture" as to be hardly distinct from other sub-Saharan groups. Cavalli-Sforza et al. (1994: Fig. 3.5.1) show a genetic tree mapping the genetic distance of sub-Saharan populations, and the Mbuti appear as one of the first branching of sub-Saharan populations (although still closer to these than to NE Africans, which include most Afroasiatic speakers).

This might initially appear to be strong counter-evidence to the claim made in this paper. However the tree also groups together closely the following:

- Sandawe (central Tanzania) with Fulbe, Wolof and Serer (Senegambia)
- San (Southern Africa) with Somali (Hor of Africa)
- Kanama (northern Ethiopia) with SE Bantu
- Bastoid (central Cameroon) with Hausa (southern West Africa)

These groupings are all geographically remote from one another and neither their cultures nor their languages have anything in common, being part of different phyla. Such conjunctions correspond to no known historical or archaeological data. It seems very difficult to know what meaning to attach to them or how to use them in any credible reconstruction of African prehistory.

Another more disturbing aspect of this type of analysis is the way inconvenient conjunctions are removed when Cavalli-Sforza is writing directly of the links with language. Thus in Cavalli-Sforza (1991) where the standard genetic classifications of language phyla are mapped against the results from DNA, these inconvenient results have disappeared, appearing to make the match between disciplines more convincing than it is actually.

As superficially attractive as DNA is for building models of African ethnohistory, all that cladograms show are mappings of conjunctions and frequencies of genes. There seems to be no particular reason why these should be codistributed with language phyla and apparently they are not. The results from genetics are so remote from the results derived from other disciplines that they cannot presently contribute to this debate.

d. Biological arguments: Dwarfing and the tropical forest environment

It is generally accepted that one of the effects of inhabiting a tropical forest environment is dwarfing. In Africa, both wild and domestic animals have undergone size reduction. The forest zone has pygmy elephants, hippo, chimpanzees and buffaloes, while cows, pigs, sheep, goats and horses all exist in dwarf forms (Epstein 1971:213). Similarly, there is evidence that shortness of stature is positively correlated with tropical forest, not just in Africa but across the world (Cavalli Sforza et al. 1994). This has been interpreted as a response to inbreeding in an adverse environment, but a more positive view would be that there are considerably reduced energy costs in moving rapidly around in a tropical forest with reduced height and bodyweight. Whatever the reason, the evidence is that size reduction occurs and that strong selection pressure can produce these effects within a relatively short period, at least in evolutionary terms, to judge by domestic animals.

An interesting confirmation of this hypothesis comes from a very different source, studies of the "insect-like growth factor 1" (IGF-1). Diamond (1991) has reviewed various theories that purport to explain the short stature of pygmies. A popular view is that the failure to develop the IGF-1 after puberty is an inherited genetic predisposition. This would be consonant with an ancient population whose genetic make-up would thus be quite distinct from the adjacent agriculturists. However, a recent investigation (Dalio et al. 1996) has shown that this is not the case, that lack of IGF-1 is not genetic and must thus be attributed to contingent environmental effects. This is what would be expected if the pygmies have adapted to the forest only relatively recently.

Reasons for being suspicious of the traditional view: Subsistence
a. Can hunter-gatherers live off rainforest?

One of the arguments that has swept through the literature in recent years relates to the practicality of existing in the rainforest all year round solely through the products of hunting and gathering. At least two authors have argued that it is virtually impossible to live on hunted and gathered resources within a tropical rain forest throughout the year (Headland 1987 and Bailec et al. 1989). Again, no pygmy group
has been reported that does not stray at all part of the year at the edge of the forest on the interior of the pygmy groups for the wild Baboon, I think, it is probably the same. The pygmy groups are not particular in this respect, but they tend to rely on the forest for much of their food.

Another frequent case of the residents are the onlookers, those who do not actually participate in the activities. However, a recent decision has been made that these consultations are only superficial, anything unstructured or organisational features of these two cultures are quite different (Furman & Oliver, this volume).

b. Hunting technology

Any hunter-gatherer people with long experience of a particular environmental and cultural ecology are likely to develop very specific hunting technology and practices. This is certainly the case with the Hadza, whose arrows and poisons are developed in relation to the forest. As the Hadza are usually not well off beyond the forest zone, this argument would be valid. By contrast, the case of the pygmys, there is not much evidence that their neighbours are particularly well off beyond the forest and the pygmys can also be produced well beyond the forest zone. An argument based on this evidence is not likely to be stronger.

An additional piece of evidence is that the pygmys have been described as using stone tools in an entirely different fashion. This would not be surprising, if the pygmys indeed had an entirely different culture and way of life. However, in a recent study, we have been able to demonstrate that the pygmys do not use stone tools in a different way, and that the only difference is that the pygmys use stone tools more frequently.

For this reason, it is likely that the pygmys do not use stone tools in a different way. However, it is possible that the pygmys use stone tools more frequently because they have a wider range of musical instruments available to them. The pygmys have a wider range of musical instruments, including those of their forest neighbours. However, since the pygmys have been long considered to be more sophisticated, it is possible that this is not the case. Another frequent case of the residents are the onlookers, those who do not actually participate in the activities. However, a recent decision has been made that these consultations are only superficial, anything unstructured or organisational features of these two cultures are quite different (Furman & Oliver, this volume).
Reasons for being suspicious of the traditional view: Summary
Table 1 presents a synopsis of the types of evidence that seem to count against the antiquity of the pygmies.

Table 1. Summary of evidence against the antiquity of pygmy culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Evidence</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic</td>
<td>Substrates</td>
<td>No clear evidence for substrate languages of unrelated phyia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological</td>
<td>Stone tools</td>
<td>No direct evidence us the nature of populations making the tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological</td>
<td>DNA</td>
<td>Historical interpretation of all DNA results are problematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short stature</td>
<td>Can arise within a few millennia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Tropical forest may not support hunting-gathering without trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>No clear evidence of distinctive hunting technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Music has no features common to all pygmy groups, not parallels for its supposedly distinctive features beyond the pygmy area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Counter-evidence: Pygmies and Twa outside the forest
A feature of the pygmy/Twa complex that is seldom fully analysed is the widespread presence of "Twa" populations well south of the rain forest proper. Indeed many maps of pygmies seem to ignore these southern groups (e.g. in Balchuchet 1993c) presumably on the grounds that they disrupt the image of the civilisation "forestière". However, there are "Twa" populations in semi-arid Angola, Namibia, Botswana and Zambia (Dorman 1925, De Almeida 1965, 1994 and Estermann 1976 [1958]). Those in Zambia and Botswana are characteristically found in swamps, but in Angola in desertic regions. Documentation on the Twa of the Namibia/Angola region is very limited and tends to confuse them with Khoisan populations.
The southern Tsonga today live in close economic symbiosis with the Zulus, Xhosa, and Nguni. The social pattern of the community is best understood through its relationships, particularly with the Zulus. The social organization and political structure of the Tsonga are essentially similar to those of the Zulus. The Zulu have a more highly stratified society, with a larger number of social classes and a more complex hierarchy. The Tsonga have a simpler, more egalitarian society, with fewer social classes and a less complex hierarchy.

In the past, the Zulus and Tsonga were often at odds with each other, but today they live in close economic symbiosis. The Zulus are more numerous and have a larger population, but the Tsonga are more mobile and have a greater ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The Zulus are more established and have a more developed political and social structure, while the Tsonga are more nomadic and have a more fluid social structure.

The Tsonga have a number of economic activities, including agriculture, livestock rearing, and trade. They are also well known for their weaving and pottery. The Zulus have a more developed agricultural economy, with a larger number of crops and a more diverse range of livestock. The Zulus are also more established in their political and social structure, with a larger number of social classes and a more complex hierarchy.

In conclusion, the Tsonga and Zulus are similar in many ways, but they also have some important differences. The Zulus are more numerous and have a larger population, but the Tsonga are more mobile and have a greater ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The Zulus are more established and have a more developed political and social structure, while the Tsonga are more nomadic and have a more fluid social structure.
...
spoke a Kuliak language. The Ik were made famous through a rather sensational monograph by Tunnell (1973) whose empirical bases are questioned in Heine (1988). More recent work on the status of these languages and peoples is found in Heine (1976) and Carlos (1993).

ONGOTA: The Ongota or Birade are a very small group of hunter-gatherers living in symbiosis with the Tsamay in southwestern Ethiopia. Their language has been the subject of much discussion but remains only dubiously classified as Afroasiatic (Fleming 1990; Flem et al. 1992).

SHAHO: The Shahe or Mekejar live in southwestern Ethiopia and their language has proven hard to classify. Most authors consider it to be part of Nilo-Saharan (e.g. Fleming 1991).

KAJASSO: The Kajasso are a small group of hunter-gatherers living in Dar Sila in southeastern Chad described briefly in Le Rouvre (1980:129-130). Their language is supposed to be related to neighbouring Mubi and thus Eastern Chadic.

LAAL: The Laal are a small population (some 300) of fishermen living in central Chad. Their language is analysed by Royedlild (n.d.). Although it has elements of neighboring Chadic and Adamawa languages it appears to be difficult to classify unambiguously.

JALAA: The Jala no longer exist as a distinct ethnic group. Jala is a language spoken by perhaps twenty elderly individuals among the Cham people of northeastern Nigeria (Kleinwillinghoff, in press). However, although it has numerous loanwords from Adamawa languages, it has proved impossible to classify satisfactorily in its core vocabulary.

b. Some puzzles

OROPOM: The Oropom people of Karamoja, Uganda are described in an article by Wilson (1970) as still using "stone age" cultural elements. Wilson provides a sample of their language, which despite the efforts of some linguists has never proven reliable to existing languages. However, no other researches has been able to track the Oropom again and there is some doubt as to their existence in the form described by Wilson.

KUIJARG: London & Bender (1983) describe briefly a people living on the Sudan/Chad borderland, the Kujarge. The Kujarge live in seven settlements near Jebel Mira with scattered individuals living on the edge of other communities in this region. They number perhaps 1000 and live principally by hunting-gathering. So little is known about their language that its classification is in doubt. It shows some links with the neighboring Kajasso who speak a Chadic language and are also largely hunter-gatherers.

**c. Summary: remnant populations**

These remnant populations have features in common: they live in remote areas, they are isolated, and most are or have recently been hunter-gatherers and/or speak languages which have proved difficult to relate conclusively to the major language phyla of Africa. This does not imply that they have anything in common, genetically, linguistically or otherwise.

Table 2 and Map 2 show the groups discussed with the languages they speak and their possible classification. The final column of the table shows whether they are hunter-gatherers or have been so in the recent past.

**Table 2. Summary of African isolates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Hunter-gatherer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kwadi</td>
<td>Keroka,</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>Ik/Waiek</td>
<td>Khoisan?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kwepe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwisi</td>
<td>Mucacas</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>Kuvale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bantu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duma</td>
<td>Borajuma</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>Nama</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khoisan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimba</td>
<td>OvaTumba</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>Heyro</td>
<td>Bantu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadza</td>
<td>Kindiga</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Hadza</td>
<td>Isolate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandawe</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Sandawe</td>
<td>Khoisan?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okiek</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td></td>
<td>Okiek</td>
<td>Nilotic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahalo</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dahalo</td>
<td>Cushitic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yaako</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yaako</td>
<td>Cushitic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonsi</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td></td>
<td>Af Boon</td>
<td>Cushitic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ik/Soo</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td></td>
<td>Koolak</td>
<td>Nilo-Saharan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongota Birale</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Ongota</td>
<td>Afroasiatic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shabo</td>
<td>Mekejar</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Shabo</td>
<td>Nilo-Saharan?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oropom</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Oropom</td>
<td>Isolate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kajursne</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Kajurse</td>
<td>Chadic?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kajarse</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Kajarse</td>
<td>Chadic?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laal</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Laal</td>
<td>Isolate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalas</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Jalas</td>
<td>Isolate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There is a considerable literature on modern hunter-gatherers as the products of "encapsulation" and it may well be that not all of these groups are in fact direct inheritors of a pre-agricultural past. Nonetheless, ethnographers too can fall prey to the models presented by local dominant groups as the case of the Cimba suggests. The Cimba probably are an ethnographically distinct group but it is in the interest of the Herero to present them as marginal Herero.

The Sotho African group, the Kwati, Kwiti, Dama and Cimba are referred to in the "official" literature. Nurse et al. (1985:151) are clearly puzzled by their biological activities and conclude "The only tenable alternative explanation is that they descend from pre-Khoi autarchohones who lived in small groups all speaking different languages". Reports suggest that the Hadza and the Dakhala are physically quite distinct from their neighbors. However, in the case of the other peoples here discussed there appears to be no direct evidence of their physical type.

Terms for pygmy in Bantu languages

Vamvina (1990), in considering the pre-Bantu inhabitants of the Central African rain forest, assumes that the pygmies were already present but that there were other autarchohones. He says:

"Therefore the first farmers may have found fishermen as well as hunter-gatherers in the area. Such people would not have looked like pygmies."

(Vamvina 1990:47)

Vamvina (1990:56, 331) then develops the argument that the original meaning of the term "gab" (Gothic's CS 1804-5) was "bushpeople", i.e. hunter-gatherers, and that only later it came to mean pygmies for which another term "yaka" can be reconstructed. If so, this casts an interesting light on many oral traditions supposedly fearing pygmies which may simply refer to autarchohones. Only when these two terms merged with the developing ethnicity of the pygmies would their important ritual role (for example in the Kasa kingdoms) gradually develop.

Schadberg (in this volume) in an examination of the vocabulary applied to pygmies reveals that the term "gab" in Bantu languages makes the point that in some of the earlier dictionaries of Bantu languages the definitions given do not apply specifically to pygmies but refer rather to "forest-dweller, person who lives in the bush" and do not imply specifically small size. Later dictionaries tend to define "gab" as specifically "pygmy" and this may represent a consolidation of European definitions rather than the underlying meaning of the term. The expanding Bantu encountered forest-dwellers who were the original "pygmies" of the terms nowadays applied to the pygmies.

* A comparable example would be the merging of all travelling peoples in English to the category "gypsy".
Interpreting and traditions are called "traditional traditions" since they are usually not recorded in written form. However, they play a significant role in the transmission of knowledge and values in many societies.

The passage below discusses the relationship between traditions and the development of linguistic diversity.

"The Gbome language, for example, is traditionally considered to be the language of the ancestors. The Gbome people have a rich oral tradition that includes stories, songs, and proverbs. These stories are passed down from generation to generation, and they serve as a means of preserving the community's history and cultural heritage.

The Gbome language is spoken by the Gbome people in the western part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is a member of the Kuba language family and is closely related to other languages spoken in the region, such as the Luba and Lunda languages.

The Gbome language is notable for its rich vocabulary, which includes words related to agriculture, hunting, and other traditional activities. It is also known for its complex grammar, which includes multiple cases and verb conjugations.

The Gbome language is an important part of the cultural identity of the Gbome people, and it is used in various social and ceremonial contexts. It is also used in religious practices, such as the Gbome Church, which is the largest religious institution in the region.

The Gbome people have been exposed to other languages and cultures through contact with neighboring communities and through trade and travel. However, the Gbome language remains strong and is still widely spoken today.

The Gbome language is an example of how traditions and linguistic diversity can coexist and evolve over time. It highlights the importance of preserving and promoting traditional languages and cultures, as they are vital components of human heritage and identity.

The Gbome language is also an example of how linguistic diversity can be used to promote economic development and social cohesion. The Gbome people have developed unique ways of using their language in business and trade, which has contributed to their economic growth and sustainability.

The Gbome language is an example of how traditions and linguistic diversity can coexist and evolve over time. It highlights the importance of preserving and promoting traditional languages and cultures, as they are vital components of human heritage and identity.

The Gbome language is also an example of how linguistic diversity can be used to promote economic development and social cohesion. The Gbome people have developed unique ways of using their language in business and trade, which has contributed to their economic growth and sustainability.

The Gbome language is an example of how traditions and linguistic diversity can coexist and evolve over time. It highlights the importance of preserving and promoting traditional languages and cultures, as they are vital components of human heritage and identity.

The Gbome language is also an example of how linguistic diversity can be used to promote economic development and social cohesion. The Gbome people have developed unique ways of using their language in business and trade, which has contributed to their economic growth and sustainability.
populations of hunter-gatherers who were already living throughout this region (see MacDonald, in press, a). Only Khoisan speakers survived in substantial numbers. The others were reduced to marginal groups virtually concealed noong speakers of languages within the major language phyla.

The dense, humid tropical forest required a very specific type of exploitation; without iron it was difficult to cut down enough of it to farm in the forest. The farmers therefore used the ecotones, rivers, clearings in the forest or created a derived savannah wherever burning was an effective strategy. To exploit the seasonal produce of the forest a specialised group of hunters developed; these became the African pygmies.

d. Political and development implications

Compared with the other hunter-gatherer populations discussed here, the pygmies have been the recipient of considerable attention from development agencies and human rights monitors. While this is not in principle problematic and the case of the Rwandan Twa suggests that it is fully justified (Lewis & Knight 1996), the motives and intellectual substructure of some of this work are shaky, to say the least. The pygmies may or may not be the “indigenous” people of the tropical forest and indeed the forest itself seems increasingly less likely to be the primordial entity beloved of its advocates. The “lost” hunter-gatherers of West-Central Africa may have co-evolved with the forest over the last 100,000 years, manipulating its structure to meet their subsistence needs ever more effectively. These techniques they passed onto the individuals of the forest before being overwhelmed genetically by the incoming agricultural populations. Justice and human rights for present-day pygmy populations should be based not on an ethno-cultural conception of an essentially mythic historical identity but on a solid appreciation of the situation of the people today.
N.B. The volume in which this paper was published had an integrated bibliography. However, in fact, the editor’s made a complete mess of the references and many of them were excluded. Hence this appendix, which is not part of the published text.

References


