

## PYGMIC TOURS

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**ABSTRACT** Among Africa's eastern Pygmies, the history of tourism is longer than that of anthropology, a fact most anthropologists to the Ituri have chosen to ignore. Instead, an ethnography has grown that focuses primarily on the Pygmies relationship with the ecosystem in which they live. The world beyond the rainforest has been excluded from our understanding of their lives. By detailing the extent of Pygmic tourism in four different locations in and around the Ituri, the aim of this paper is to show how this exclusionary practice has led to only a partial understanding of Africa's Pygmies. We are left with a myth of the "forest people," and no adequate way to explain those Pygmies that do not correspond to the myth. They are abandoned in a condition of vagabondage, of passive acceptance of their ultimate fate: extinction by the contamination of the external world. Using the Sua of Uganda as an example of this presumed situation, I describe how, rather than slide into extinction, they actively deal with a world of multiple levels through the navigational skill of reflective ethnicity. They choose to expand their socio-political horizons, rather than shrink into the depths of the forest.

**Key Words:** Pygmies; Tourism; Authenticity; Vagabondage; Reflective ethnicity

## INTRODUCTION

In its new megamass form of multiple niche markets (Wheeller, 1994), tourism has become one of the world's most significant industries (WTO, 1999). Already, it is the single largest generator of voluntary human movement that there is (Tilley, 1997: 74), shaping the very world we live in and the myths we live by. Through tourism, spaces, both real and imagined, are being transformed. Urban landscapes, as well as their use values, are regenerated (cf. Judd & Fainstein, eds., 1999). The obsolete remains of the old industrial metropolises are revamped with the new meanings of the technopolis. Similarly, the natural environment is reinscribed with eco-heritage myths of conservation and preservation (cf. Urry, ed., 1995). The rural has morphed into urban hinterland; from being areas of production for cities into being their sites of consumption, their playgrounds.

With an ever wider range of destination choices being consumed by an ever increasing number of tourists, tourism spreads the new values of the techno era across the world. Few places remain beyond the scope of tourism. The remote, once a metaphor of spatial distance and of our own conceptualized geographies and anthropologies (Ardener, 1987), is now a lure in the language of tourism marketing. A current brochure on Kenya demonstrates this fact: "Delamere's Camp ... has a remote, intimate feel. However it is easily accessible as a city break, only a two to

three hour drive or a ten-minute flight from Nairobi” (Warneford, 1999: 60). The remote is, paradoxically, now only moments away, available to all those who can afford it. As are, of course, the people that live there, the people once considered the preserve of anthropology. Open a brochure to anywhere from Sarawak to Senegal and you will find “culture” for sale.

The speed of change that tourism has brought to our relations with and conceptions of space has been astounding. Little wonder then that Zygmunt Bauman (1997) has defined the tourist as the “hero” of postmodernity, the characterological metaphor most suited to contemporary living. After being a figure excluded from the gaze of the serious academic, and generally regarded as trivial (cf. Nash, 1995), the tourist has finally moved out from the shadows and into focus. Now, the tourist seems “to appear everywhere, in every keynote paper at social scientific conferences, as a symbol of our allegedly post-modern era” (Jokinen & Veijola, 1997: 22). As a consequence of this new found interest in tourism, a debate on the similarities between the anthropologist and tourist has recently come to the fore (Crick, 1995). Are we or are’n’t we? The jury is still out.

Errington and Gewertz (1989) maintain that a distinction still holds, despite admitting similarities in motivation between anthropologist and tourist. For them, the standard barrier between the ethnographic work space and the ludic world of the tourist holds firm. Crick (1995) is not of the same mind. To him, the anthropologist is just one among many different types of tourist. A serious and sophisticated tourist, but a tourist nevertheless. Regardless of one’s own opinion, this current tension between the two activities must be seen as a renegotiation of the discipline’s artificial boundaries. James Clifford (1986; 1997) has described how anthropology created itself, marking itself as different from other types of traveller. Through the work of such historical stalwarts as Malinowski and Boas, the practice of fieldwork became the centrepiece of the disciplinary habitus (Clifford, 1986). Particular research techniques, such as long-term co-residency and familiarity with the vernacular, were adopted by fieldworkers, thereby elevating themselves to the level of scientist and opposing themselves to the broader category of traveller. Differences in motivation and practice separated the new breed of professional anthropologist from the amateurs in the field. The presence of the traveller, of the tourist, was simply ignored. In this way, the ethnographic space was cleared of interlopers and the Boasian laboratory of pure and objective research was created.

While this mythic terrain has never truly been free of unwelcome others, tourism has invaded it to such an extent that it can no longer be brushed aside. The current debate is but a stage in an ongoing Foucauldian process of inclusion and exclusion, that reflects both the very real changes in the world and the corresponding effects on the constitution of academia itself. One consequence of these redrawing of disciplinary boundaries has been the realization that the ethnographic space cleansed of all polluting influences was and is a convenient fiction. Whilst at one time it helped to smooth the development of anthropology, it is now equally clear that this fiction has clouded and continues to cloud our understanding of the peoples at the centre of anthropology. To work within a myth is to make a myth. To be partial is to be incomplete, and that is exactly what anthropology has been through its

exclusionary practices. Crick (1995) maintains that in order for us to be serious or systematic about the political economy of the world, then international tourism has to be integral to our analysis. It can no longer be excluded from the discipline of anthropology. This becomes a great deal more self evident if we look at one of anthropology's more enduring brand names as a generic exemplar: Africa's Pygmy population.

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND PYGMIES

Pygmies have long been a classic illusion of the unknown other, an ultimate difference. Borges (1970: 188) labelled them one of his "imaginary beings": one of the mythic peoples, like Banshees, Sirens and Trolls, that made up a part of the knowledge of the ancient Romans and Greeks. However, unlike the others, the Pygmies were given a corporal form when they were finally "discovered" deep in the "unexplored" heart of Africa by Schweinfurth, in 1870. The remote in time were fused with the remote in space. Fantasy was mixed with fantasy when Schweinfurth (1873, 2: 127) wrote, "at last, was I able veritably to feast my eyes upon a living embodiment of the myths of some thousand years!" It was this revelation that marks the moment of the invention of Pygmies (cf. Bahuchet, 1993).

From that time on, the information the world received about these rediscovered remnants of history was mostly through the writings of travellers such as Stanley or colonial officers like Sir Harry Johnston. The myth now became an authorized reality. Amateur anthropology filtered into the discourse, but only as an adjunct to more populist styles of exposition. Pygmies became a staple ingredient in books on Africa. The first professional anthropologists to enter the field were Patrick Putnam, in 1928, and Dr. Paul Schebesta, in 1929. Neither men, however, corresponded to the ideal of the professional ethnographer.

Putnam "went native," losing the professional distance of objectivity and failing to produce any substantial ethnographic work. He lived for many years among Bambuti, at Epulu, but his relationships with Pygmy women and his lifestyle in general (cf. Mark, 1995), marked him out as an eccentric in Africa, and not an ethnographer of the continent. Schebesta also carried out extensive research over a long period of time (cf. Dupre, 1999), and, unlike Putnam, he wrote many books about this. The problem lies with the language of publication. His serious works (*Die Bambuti-Pygmaen vom Ituri, 1938-1950*) were published only in German, and they remain untranslated. The books that were translated to English (*Among Congo Pygmies, 1933; My Pygmy and Negro Hosts, 1936a; Revisiting my Pygmy Hosts, 1936b*), and therefore far more widely consumed, were not academic in style. Instead they were examples of the travel writing of the time, as the titles alone indicate. Both men deviated too far from the emerging norms of English and American anthropology. Putnam deviated by going too far beyond the pale, being almost too modern, while Schebesta did so by not going far enough and seeming to remain embedded in the old school of less scholarly anthropology. They were both recognized as experts on Pygmies, but not as modern anthropologists. Rather, they were experts within the populist discourse of travel.

It was only with the arrival of Colin Turnbull that Pygmies were finally stamped with the seal of anthropological acceptance. With the publication of "The Forest People" (1961), Africa's Pygmies moved from being a peripheral curiosity to being central to the discipline's mainstream, influencing a wide range of theories (cf. Frankland, 1999: 61). Through what was essentially a highly subjective travel book, Turnbull refashioned the myth that enshrouded the Pygmies, recasting it as a version of Rousseau's noble savage, Marx's primitive communist and any other remix of the same old fantasy there is. Yet despite this, "The Forest People" was lauded as a "delight" by such establishment figures as Margaret Mead and Harry Shapiro. On the dust jacket of the first British edition, Mead was quoted as saying that it was "constructed with great dexterity, so that the reader is carried along by the charm and movement of the narrative, almost unaware of the underpinning of arduous scientific field work that lies like bedrock below." Just in case the reader was unaware of these hidden depths, the back of the jacket has an elegant portrait of Turnbull, with a full list of his academic achievements below. Turnbull was bestowed with the authority of the anthropologist, and his narrative given the credit of ethnography.

While his public image was already secure, it is doubtful whether Turnbull would have achieved the wide-scale and long lasting anthropological acclaim that he did without the back-up of his dense ethnographic tome, "Wayward Servants" (1965). The combination of the two, of detail and emotion, has proven irresistible. Turnbull's description of the Epulu Bambuti as autonomous, egalitarian hunter-gatherers in harmony with each other and the forest environment has become the baseline study for both the populist and anthropological depictions of all Pygmies (cf. Frankland, 1999). It is from this romantic image that all subsequent ones have been built, with the consequence that all those Pygmies that do not conform to the ideal of "forest people" are excluded from the picture. Mbuti transforms into a synonym for Pygmy (cf. Hewlett, 1996), and their lifestyle becomes the archetype by which other Pygmies are rated.

Elsewhere, I (Frankland, 1999) have labelled this ethnographic tendency "Turnbull's syndrome." This syndrome, which all of us interested in Pygmies suffer from to some extent, can be described briefly as the excessive focus on the forest environment due to a romantic fascination with and desire for the purity of the exoticized other. For tourists, it has been said that the myth of the "authentic savage" acts as a primary luring device, serving as a sign for the pure and original other, an other untouched by the horrors of the modern world (Bruner, 1991). For anthropologists, the authentic Pygmy seems to do much the same. This has led anthropologists to search out those Pygmies least affected by or likely to undergo dramatic change. From Schebesta to Bailey, there has been an avowed anthropological intention to study only the ultimate Pygmy. Dupre (1999: 135) notes that Schebesta's intention was to study Pygmies "in their most pristine environment ... as far removed from the influences of civilization as possible." Many years later, Bailey (1989: 667) exhibits a similar desire for the authentic Pygmy when he chose his fieldsite because "it stood the least chance of undergoing dramatic change in the coming study years."

The consequence of this desire for purity is that the deep forest, the centre, has been privileged over the periphery of the roadside and forest edge. This structural dichotomy spatially incarcerates the concept of what it is to be Pygmy within the confines of the canopy. The result of this environmental encapsulation is that many Pygmies, like Uganda's Batwa and Basua, that exist outside of this allocated niche have, at best, been ignored or, at worst, been categorized as culturally degraded. In this sense, to deviate from the accepted norm is to be deviant in lifestyle. Cultural variation among the Pygmies, when it is acknowledged (eg. Hewlett, 1996), is done so only within the context of the rainforest. Along with cultural change and human agency, variety vanishes into the depths of the forest, and, as anthropologists, we are left without an adequate theoretical language to explain the existence of the majority of Africa's Pygmies.

The partiality of the ethnography of Pygmies becomes clearer still when we realize that not only are the majority of Pygmies excluded from the ideal but so is the outside world. There is a profound ethnographic absence of tourists and other sojourners to "Pigmy Land" (Geil, 1905) that perpetuates the fantasy of the untouched remote. In their classic text, Turner and Ash (1975), describing the destructive horrors of mass tourism, liken the "Golden Hordes" that flock from charter plane to beach to the Barbarians of old. Speculating on the future, they (Turner and Ash, 1975: 171) write that "one thinks with horror of the prospects of Xingu tours or Pygmic tours - tours of "people reserves" just as we have tours of "game reserves": "See life in the Stone Age, today." Yet, Colin Turnbull himself (1976: 117), actually described the Mbuti as having an economy at "the Stone Age level" and it is an implicit motivation behind the anthropological search for the authentic Pygmy. More surprisingly, It is inaccurate. The history of Pygmic tours is in fact longer than the practice of professional anthropology among the same people.

## PYGMIES AND TOURISM

Among the Eastern Pygmies of Africa, including both Bambuti and Batwa clusters, four areas that regularly attracted tourists can be located. First, the area around Kivu and the Virunga volcanoes, straddling the borders of The Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. Second, the Epulu area of the Ituri forest, the very home of Turnbull's creation. The third area is along the roadside through the Ituri, particularly around Beni and Mount Hoyo. Fourth, and last, is the Semuliki forest, just over the border from Beni, and into the western edge of Uganda. All 4 zones are linked together by the overall pattern of colonial penetration of the remote, regional political developments and post-colonial trends of movement. But each of these areas also has their own localized history and it is these that I will look at now. The purpose behind this is to demonstrate the growth of the myth of the Pygmy and its antithesis, the anti-myth of the tourist object, and not to plot a unilineal course for Pygmy tourism.

The first site around Kivu and the Virunga chain of volcanoes, commonly referred to as the Switzerland or Alps of Africa, drew the Batwa into the world of

tourism in two ways. The first was as a comparison to the Tutsi in an ethnographic tour of evolution in the raw. Africa was a laboratory for tourists also, where they could meet the Twa, exemplars of dwarves and “the earliest primitive peoples of the Lake Kivu region” (Akeley, 1950: 81), as well as the Tutsi giant, “graceful and dignified ... like an Oriental” (Akeley, 1950, 251). In a guide book (*Travellers’ Guide ...*, 1949: 408) of the time, we are told that “Pygmoid” clans of Batwa can be found near the Nyiragongo volcano, and that the local “chief” will arrange a performance by them, if so desired. The use of the word “Pygmoid,” a term usually only ever applied to the Batwa to indicate their intermarriage with other people and the corresponding lack of racial purity, indicates one reason for the gradual decrease in touristic interest in the Twa. As roads were cut into the Ituri, the “pure” Pygmy, the Mbuti, acted as a more attractive opposite to the Tutsi giant, as a better genetic example. Why put up with the “larger cousins of the true Pygmies” (Akeley, 1951: 81), when the real thing was ever nearer at hand? Here is the tourist version of Turnbull’s syndrome, the same search for the authentic primitive.

This evolutionary curiosity continued into the second way in which the Twa became involved with tourism, which was as guides in the emergent business gorilla tourism. The most famous centre for this was Walter Baumgartel’s Travellers Rest Hotel, in Kisoro, Uganda, where, from the mid 1950s on, tourists and scientists alike gathered before heading into the forests on Mt. Mgahinga’s slopes. The conflagration of Pygmies and gorillas had been under way for sometime, with the search for myths on the ground encouraged by the reproduction of myths through the Western media. The film, *Congorilla*, made by Martin and Osa Johnson in 1932, blended the two together with such success that it spawned a book (Johnson, 1932) and also a dance craze of the same name (P.J. & E.M. Imperato, 1992: 167-169). However, the arrival of Dian Fossey to the area, in 1963, changed all this.

Fossey’s attitude towards the Twa was one of outright hostility, the dichotomic opposite to her obsession with gorillas. It was through her attitude, and the growing acceptance of the idea of conservation, that the rights of gorillas came to be favoured over and above those of the Twa. In the same way that Turnbull’s opinion framed the populist debate on Pygmies, so Fossey’s did with the gorillas. She is quoted as saying that “the Batwa are poachers pure and simple” (in Mowat, 1988: 59), a generalization that typifies the environmentalist bias that casts humans as destructive intruders into the forest. This bias lingers on, and in the early 1990s, the Abayanda Twa of Uganda were forcibly evicted from both Bwindi and Mgahinga forests so that they could be turned into National Parks and the gorillas could be protected. The majority have been left landless and received no compensation for their eviction. According to the local Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Ernest Shalita, they have been forced into adopting a lifestyle that he calls a “culture of begging.”

Despite this, the Twa are beginning to make a return to the space of tourism. Ejected from the forests to make way for conservation and tourism, they are now, ironically, one of the attractions that have grown up because of the success of gorilla tourism. Once again, Dian Fossey is involved. The release of the film, *Gorillas in the Mist*, helped make gorilla tourism big business (Riley et al., 1998) to the extent

that it now requires a supportive structure of tourist product to embellish it and to help hold the customer. Nearby to Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks, as well as close to the popular resort, Lake Bunyoni, the base for many peoples trips to the Parks, you can pay to visit Abayanda villages. It would appear that regardless of the old physical anthropology that differentiated between Pygmy and Pygmoid, the modern notion, as consumed by tourists, is monolithic. The brand name Pygmy packages a simple myth of the exoticized eco-other, and that brand name alone is enough to interest tourists. The wheel has turned full circle. Once again, the Twa are the most accessible of Pygmies, as both Epulu and Beni are bang in the middle of the DRC warzone and the Semuliki is one of the areas of Uganda most effected by the uprising of the Allied Democratic Forces, an anti-Museveni guerilla force.

This, of course, was not always the situation and, in 1928, when Patrick Putnam first arrived at Epulu, the blanket of colonial security lay over the Ituri forest. Putnam arrived as a budding anthropologist, but he died at Epulu, in 1953, the proprietor of Camp Putnam, a small but world famous hotel (Mark, 1995). According to Turnbull (1961: 25), Putnam “established a dispensary and a leper colony, turning his home into a guest-house to help pay the expenses of his hospital work.” And some guest-house it was. In 1931, when Emily Hahn, later famous as a columnist on the *New Yorker*, stayed with Putnam, there were only a few Europeans that visited. “The Congo was a quiet place in those days - no Hemingway, no millionaires on safari, no uranium rush, nothing but Pygmies and Negroes most of the time” (Hahn, 1965: 2). But only 8 years later, in 1939, Putnam was charging his guests \$12 per night and ensuring that between 50 and 75 Pygmies would move to the edge of his camp for the delight and convenience of his visitors (Hickey & Wylie, 1993: 80). In the terms of MacCannell (1976), authenticity was being staged. Putnam was creating a tourist product, the authentic Pygmy, specifically for tourist consumption. The myth of the Pygmy became centred around this production at Camp Putnam. In her book (Putnam & Keller, 1954) on her years at Epulu, Anne, Putnam’s wife, describes a continuous stream of visitors to the hotel. Indeed, when Turnbull first arrived at Epulu, in 1951, he was himself a tourist, visiting out of “curiosity” and following the signpost for the hotel (Turnbull, 1961: 24).

It was through this visit to Putnam’s Pygmies that Turnbull decided to become an anthropologist, and through him that Turnbull was accepted into the field (Mark, 1995: 168-169). It is not surprising, then, that he should downplay the importance of Putnam’s little “guest-house.” Schebesta himself visited Epulu in 1955, and Mark (1995: 200-201) comments on his distaste for the decayed culture of the Mbuti there. She (Mark, 1995) quotes him as saying that “nowhere else in the Ituri have I found such Pygmies.” A similar attitude to the Epulu Mbuti’s involvement with tourism can be found in guide book (*The Travellers’ Guide...*, 1956: 576) that describes “these Negrillos” as begging for cigarettes and presents, and as being difficult to get rid of. Not surprisingly, Schebesta (1957: 63) criticized Turnbull’s early work on Mbuti ceremonies precisely because of the level of tourism at Epulu and the impact of it on the Mbuti. Turnbull sought out Anne Putnam for reassurance, and she told him that the Pygmies of Camp Putnam were only “spoiled superficially,” but they remained, essentially, authentic (Mark, 1995: 201).

When the tourists or Bantu had left the area, the Mbuti reverted to their traditional ways (Mark, 1995). The implication was, of course, that Putnam, and by extension, Turnbull, could see beyond this surface behaviour, that they could get to the real Pygmy behind the tourist facade, whereas Schebesta had not. The Epulu myth was secure.

Turnbull settled on this view. In his work, Camp Putnam was cleared of tourists, creating the ideal Boasian space. But the same situation elsewhere was vilified. By the time Turnbull had returned to carry out his field-work, in 1957, Putnam had died and Epulu had changed: "Backing on to .. Pat's estate was an ugly, modern motel built by an enterprising Belgian. The main attraction was that on the other side of the road the government had established a Station de Chasse for the capture of forest animals, particularly okapi .. Camp Putnam remained unaltered. Even the old mud mansion still stood" (Turnbull, 1961: 31). Eloquently, but disingenuously, Turnbull conceals more than he reveals. Camp Putnam is a village and of the environment, whereas the new motel is matter out of place. The reason for this encroachment of the horrors of modernity is not the Pygmies but the new attraction of the okapi. Kenge, Turnbull's chief informant, who had worked for Putnam, was, in 1957, a "bugler at the animal station" (Turnbull, 1961: 33). As soon as Turnbull offered Kenge the chance to work for him instead, "Kenge looked at me in the frank, open-eyed way of the real pygmy and said that he didn't mind" (Turnbull, 1961: 34). The real returned. Any change to the Mbuti was indeed "superficial."

Through a language of exclusion and concealment, Turnbull extends the same spatial and structural dichotomy that he uses to characterize the Mbuti-Bira relationship to cover the Mbuti relationship with the world external to the rainforest. (cf. Frankland, 1999). In his dualism, the Mbuti and their forest environment are pure, sacred and Utopian, while the Bira and the village are opposed to them as polluted, profane and dystopic. In the extension of this moral mapping, Turnbull expands the village mentality to include all but the Mbuti, his Mbuti. 22 years after "The Forest People" (1961) was published, Turnbull still stuck to the same romantic hypothesis: "When Patrick Putnam died, and the "Hotel David was built, Epulu became a place where, unwittingly, Europeans displayed themselves at their worst. In the midst of an essentially egalitarian society with little traditional distinction in wealth or power, they introduced those distinctions both among each other and between themselves and the African" (Turnbull, 1983: 84). In this quote, Turnbull shows his fear of the consequences of what we now call ethnic or cultural tourism: his fear of the contamination of the other by the contaminated self, the same metaphysical conceit he applied to all his work. In blinkering himself in such a way, Turnbull can't see the forest for the jungle. He can describe Putnam as being like a quasi-chief, the Mbuti treating Camp Putnam like they would any other village (1961: 25), but he cannot reconcile this remarkable acceptance of the outside world by the Mbuti with a broader perception of social change. Likewise, he does not stain Camp Putnam with the image of dystopia that he smears on the village, nor does he attribute the negative features of the village chief to "Bwana Putnami" (Mark, 1995: 216). In creating the "forest people," Turnbull excludes all that he will not see.



The success of Epulu as a tourist attraction helped to expand the Pygmy industry along the roadside through the Ituri forest, the third of the locations with a particular history of Pygmic tours. Although Camp Putnam was the myth-generating centre of the industry, it was not the only place in the forest to experience the same form of tourism. The old colonial administrative centre at Fort Mbeni acted as the first gateway to "Pigmy Land." In the first years of the 20th Century, travellers stopped at the Fort before venturing into the "Great Pigmy Forest" (Geil, 1905). Trails had been cut through the forest linking Mbeni to both Avakubi and Irumu, with wattle and daub rest houses built along the way for the comfort of the weary travellers (Geil, 1905: 197). Further north, up the western side of the Semuliki valley, at Mboga, Ruth Fisher (n.d.) and other missionaries on "holiday" from Uganda, were being introduced to seven baptized Pygmies. Both Mbeni and Mboga were on the fringes of the forest, but the Pygmies were accessible. Schebesta (1933: 35) made use of the colonial trails on his first trip to the Ituri, during which he met "thousands" of Pygmies. By the time of his second trip, "the building of the great motor-tracks which penetrate the Ituri Forest in all directions has also tended to corrupt the naive simplicity of the pygmies" (Schebesta, 1936a: 28). Already, on the fringes of the forest, there were "hordes of degenerate pygmies" exhibiting themselves as "stage pygmies" to Europeans in return for gifts (Schebesta, 1936a). It was getting easier and easier to make contact. All an "explorer" had to do was "to invite the pygmies to call on him in a negro village" (Schebesta, 1936a: 29). Schebesta was bolder than this. He wanted "to get to know pygmy life." "Roughing it" (Schebesta, 1936a), he set up a series of his own camps to which he proceeded to invite Pygmies, either through blandishments of foods and gifts or through the coercion of their "negro chief." In attracting large numbers of pygmies to him, Schebesta initiated a pattern in which, through the auspices of local leaders, the Pygmies presented themselves as spectacles for the outside world.

It became common practice. In 1930, during the making of their hit film, *Congorilla*, Martin and Osa Johnson did the same. Near to Irumu, at the village of the Bantu chief, Piligbo, the Johnsons gathered some 500 Pygmies around them to act as the stars of their feature (Johnson, 1932: 59). On his second trip to the Ituri, Schebesta (1936a) also set up one of his camps with the help of Paligbo (sic), reinforcing the role of native chief in the Pygmy-Traveller interaction. 500 is a significant number to bring together in one place. If we accept Turnbull's (1983: 28) population estimate for Ituri Pygmies as being close to 40,000, then we are dealing with an event at which the ratio for those who attended in relation to the total population is 1: 80. Ever increasing numbers of Pygmies were brought into the radius of tourism space, and the aesthetic space of the mythic Pygmy. The Johnsons repeated this procedure a few years later when they returned to the edge of the Ituri, at Gombari. Here, they had an airstrip prepared for themselves, and, when they landed, they found some 200 Pygmies waiting for them (P.& E. Imperato, 1992: 177). The situation at Epulu was much the same, with over 250 BaMbuti congregating frequently around the Putnams (Ichikawa, 1978: 182), submitting themselves to the tourist gaze. Other film-makers, such as Dennis and Cotlow, used Epulu as the stage for their movies. When filming *Savage Splendor*,

in 1946, Cotlow also brought together at least 500 Pygmies, repeating the process, in 1954, to film *Zanzabaku* (Hickey & Wylie, 1993: 80-81).

By the time Turnbull returned to this space to carry out his fieldwork, in 1957, the consumption of the myth of the Pygmy was already in full swing. All along the roads through the forest, Pygmies could be found, willing to dance and pose for tourists in return for money. The Pygmy industry had become big business and a tourist infrastructure had developed that incorporated the Ituri into a network of tour routes from Uganda and Rwanda. The *Travellers Guide to Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi* (1956) details the extent of this development. From Nia-Nia to the east of Epulu, from Bunia to the West and Mutwanga to the South, some 13 hotels, including the Hotel de l'Ituri and the Hotel des Pygmees, were in operation by 1956. The range of facilities at the various establishments, including tennis courts, miniature golf, a cinema, curio shops and swimming pools, indicate just how accessible the remote had already become. Other attractions, such as the okapi and the Ruwenzori mountains, drew in and held increasing numbers of tourists. And close to Irumu, at Mount Hoyo, a site to rival Epulu developed as an alternate Pygmy spectacle.

Mount Hoyo was a spectacular site, with multiple attractions for the tourist (*The Travellers Guide...*, 1956: 521-527). There was a well situated hotel with facilities to match all others in the region; caves adorned by stalactites; numerous brooks and waterfalls; and there were also the Pygmies. Many had set up camp near the hotel, and the tourists could visit these villages, watch the dances and even go on hunting expeditions into the forest with them (*The Travellers Guide...*, 1956). With his usual dose of opprobrium, Turnbull (1983: 85) chastises the “entrepreneur” for developing a “whole pygmy industry.” The dances performed are fake, the setting unauthentic, the whole event showing “contempt ... for traditional beliefs and values” (Turnbull, 1983). Again, as he did with the developments at Epulu, Turnbull resorts to a language of denigration, the same language used by Schebesta and others to describe Turnbull’s Mbuti. The contaminated other can only be the fake other.

This negative attitude becomes even more apparent in relation to the fourth and last of the locations to have a history of Pygmy tourism, the Uganda side of the Semuliki valley. In 1938, the British constructed a road winding around the precipitous slopes of the Ruwenzori foothills that linked the previously secluded Semuliki valley to the rest of Uganda. With this road, another group of Pygmies, the Ugandan BaSua, became available for tourist consumption. However, unlike the generally positive travelogue accounts of meetings with the Pygmies from the first three locations, the textualization of the Sua is uniform in its negativity. From the first account I have found (Huxley, 1948) through to my most recent acquisition (Ondaatje, 1999), the response towards the Sua has consistently portrayed them as the antithesis of the myth of the authentic Pygmy.

Three main themes reappear throughout all of the traveller’s tales I have found that mention the Sua (cf. Frankland, 1999). Firstly, the Sua are depicted as drug and alcohol abusers; secondly, the Sua are frequently labelled as violent; thirdly, they are seen as having lost culture. The textual Sua, represented as hostile drug addicts bereft of tradition, are the contaminated other fully realized. In a sense, the Sua have failed in their allotted role as tourist attraction because they have not been “Pygmy” enough, their behaviour has not corresponded with tourist expectation.

## THE LANGUAGE OF TOURISM AND THE SUA

The deprecating language used by the authors of the Sua, by Turnbull to describe tourism, and his critics to describe Epulu, all demonstrate the same metaphysical assumption: that a paradise found must soon be lost, precisely because it has been discovered. This is the great paradox of travel that turns the ethnic other into a spectacle (Van den Bergh, 1994). Turnbull exhibits both the desire and the remorse of searching out the exotic, celebrating the myth but lamenting the loss of that imagination. The image of Mbuti lifestyle as “a wonderful thing full of joy and happiness and free of care” (1961: 29) reminds the alienated Westerner of the authenticity that they themselves have lost. To seek this out is to seek out the enrichment of “the beauty that they (the Mbuti) have known for so long” (1993: 9). However, the consequence of pursuing this desire for authenticity is that “the last strongholds of self-respect, of morality, of belief and faith, are threatened by the cheapest and most tawdry offerings that western technology can devise: a soul can be bought for a piece of cloth or for a packet of cigarettes” (1965: 223). The object of desire is infected with the disease of capitalism. Consequently, for the other that fails to satisfy the tourist desire, lack of authenticity becomes synonymous with commercialization.

The language of tourism has no other method of explaining those spectacles, like the Sua, that do not correspond to a particular myth. Tourism causes dependency: dependency de-authenticates culture; culture is destroyed by tourism. The language turns inwards on itself and blames itself for the loss of authenticity. The Pygmies are powerless. The current guide books reproduce the same image as the travelogues, replicating the myth of the authentic by showing just how far the Sua have fallen from a state of grace. The Sua become a living example that proves this teleological assumption, contained by the myth of the authentic Pygmy precisely because they do not correspond to it. The Bradt Guide (Briggs, 1998: 224) describes the Sua as “locked into a cycle of dependency which would now be difficult to break, and their situation offers a short, sharp lesson in the potential consequences of irresponsible cultural voyeurism.” The Sua are used as both example and warning: an example of induced deculturation and a warning to leave less corrupted Pygmies alone. Spectrum (Balletto et al., 1998: 107-108) repeats Briggs’s quote, adding that a trip to the Sua is a “depressing and disturbing experience” for the tourist. Instead of finding the authentic, these depressed tourists will have to pay an “official charge” for the privilege of taking photos of the Sua and then be pressurized into buying “junk” souvenirs (Balletto et al., 1998). For The Lonely Planet (Finlay & Crowther, 1997: 440), their culture can only be “moribund,” they can only be “another unique culture” hitting “the dust.” There is no other way to describe the anti-myth. If the myth of the authentic is to be maintained, then its ultimate alternative has to co-exist. For the anthropologist, authenticity is tainted by contact with the external, and so it is for the tourist.

In the case of the Sua, it is easy to blame their transgression of the myth on tourism. The Footprint guide (Hodd, 1999: 601) illustrates the removal of history from the Sua by taking the arrival of the Museveni government as a tourism year zero for them. Ignoring the trauma of the war years in Uganda, ignoring the Sua’s

long association with tourism, Footprint writes that the Sua have been “quick to learn their novelty value and demand considerable sums of money from tourists” (Hodd, 1999). I have read books by or spoken to people who have visited the Sua as tourists in every decade of twentieth century since the 1940s. The only interruption to this development of tourism has been war but, even in the early Amin years and the early part of the Obote 2 period, it still continued. As such, two hugely different external forces, tourism and war, have framed the socio-economic and political economies of the Sua. In both conditions, the context in which the Sua make their lives could be said to be extreme, oscillating between war zone and pleasure periphery. Sometimes, this oscillation can be from one instant to the next, with war and tourism surreal partners. In 1998, while the Semuliki valley was still troubled by the conflict between the government and the Allied Democratic Forces, some tourists were making their way down to the Sua’s village, which, at that time, was surrounded by refugees from the conflict. Tourists would watch a dance performance, unaware of the UNHCR trucks that rumbled by in the background.

By giving the Sua such a foreshortened history of tourism, the guide books exclude the Sua from the politics of Uganda, as they exclude them from history. The only context within which they are fixed is the economy of contemporary tourism. And within this economy, the Sua can only be transgressive. They are in a no win situation. They are locked into the Pygmy paradox, the hyperreality of the myth that judges every action against an imagined ideal. The lack of conformity of the Sua to an image they do not know leaves the language of tourism with only one myth left to describe them. The myth of extinction.

## BEYOND EXTINCTION

Anthropology has come up with a word to refer to those hunter-gatherers no longer living primarily by these methods of subsistence. It characterizes them as post-foragers. However, as with any other use of the post prefix, there is the assumption of a prior condition. In the case of Pygmies, that prior assumption has been Turnbull’s syndrome. The consequence of this, is that something like sedentarization is seen as a recent development, despite Schebesta (1933: 37-38) making the distinction between *Basua wa pori* (forest Bambuti) and *Basua wa mungine* (village Bambuti). What was always there becomes something new, enhancing the perception of a lifestyle slowly slipping away. This idea that the trajectory of development for Pygmies is towards extinction is clear within the language of tourism. The Pygmies move from a state of original affluence (Sahlins, 1968) to a state of abject poverty, through the introduction of the cash economy. Peace and harmony give way to alcoholism, drug use and prostitution.

The ideal of the autonomous hunter-gatherer is superseded by an image of an existence that I have labelled *vagabondage*. The term *vagabondage* was first used by Bauman (1997), but within an entirely different context. For him (Bauman, 1997), the *vagabond* is the alter ego of the tourist hero, the opposing pole of a continuum that theoretically defines postmodern existence. Unlike the tourist, who has the

luxurious obligation of voluntary movement, the vagabond is kicked from place to place like an unwanted stray, an unwelcome interloper in a world given "structure" by the tourist's "wandering interests" (Bauman, 1997: 91). The vagabond is the tourist's dread alternative, the person without choice in a world of choice. I use the term, in the context of this essay, as a metaphorical description of the opposite to the authentic Pygmy myth. The vagabond is the anti-myth of the noble savage, the Pygmy reduced to a state of dependency. In this sense, tourism itself serves as a metaphor for all of the external forces that were excluded in the making of the authentic Pygmy, and that are now included as indications of vagabondage. These would include the processes of colonialism, missionization, conservation and development, as well as economic and political change, particularly the violence of war.

The Abayanda Twa of south-western Uganda are an example of the vagabond. A Ugandan sociologist, Kabanankye (1995: 5), sees the Abayanda as compelled to abandon their traditional lifestyle, reduced to poverty, with a "considerable percentage" left no alternative but to resort to prostitution and begging. Their choiceless move from a forest to a non-forest lifestyle is what he (Kabanankye, 1995: 7) calls an "ethnocidal transition," a transition where "a whole ethnic group dies." This is vagabondage writ large. Forced by external pressures to change, the Abayanda face the abyss. Footit (1999: 20-24) adds to this depressing picture, describing the Abayanda as subservient to local Hutu and Tutsi, the majority of them left landless, with their greatest fear being "extinction." The opposite of authenticity becomes disappearance, the fate of the Abayanda already prescribed.

For a local Bishop (Shalita, 1996), the Abayanda are "professional beggars," despised by fellow Ugandans, who could well turn out to be a national problem unless they are helped by Church and government. Shalita (1996: 30-31) sees such development of the Abayanda as the only way to "drive away shyness and timidity" and help them "come out of ignorance." The myth of extinction can only be combatted by development. As Kabanankye (1997: 42) states, "the challenge that presents itself at this point is the need to formulate sustainable strategies aiming at a smooth transition." Here, the language of development does have the words to move beyond the tourism impasse of vagabondage. The threat of "extinction" requires an act of "rescue," and then transformation to the current state of civilization. Again, the echoes of the past ring loud. This is, in essence, a repeat of the missionary attitude towards Africa that viewed its inhabitants as being in dire need of moral uplift, with civilization as the torch to light up the heart of darkness.

Wrenched from the forest, the Pygmies of Uganda have descended into a vagabondage from which they must be rescued. Not surprisingly, the result of this apocalyptic view has been a rash of development projects among both the Abayanda and the Sua. In 1983, The Adventist Relief and Development Agency began a project among the Sua. Offered housing roofed with iron sheets, free blankets and clothes, as well as land and food, the Sua gradually entered into a relocation scheme planned by the Seventh Day Adventists. This project moved the Sua from their villages, at Ntandi and Kirimia, to a settlement over 8km away. At first, only a few made the move, but, in time, the rest joined them. The final enticement

was the offer of a film role in the adaptation of Michael Crichton's book, *Congo* (1983), that was planned to be partly filmed in Uganda. The Sua were going to receive around \$8,000 for their role as authentic Pygmies, and the film company was going to supplement this payment by offering half the costs of constructing a medical clinic. ADRA were to stump up the other half.

In the spatial context of their lives in the valley, this shift to Burondo represents a considerable movement. It took the Sua away from the forest and away from their relationships with neighbouring Amba and Konzo peoples. The intention of ADRA was to provide land and tuition in cultivation, but throughout the duration of the project, tourism remained the Sua's major occupation. During the 3 months I spent in the valley, in 1994, the longest period they went without a tourist visit was 3 days. On some occasions, they received up to 3 different groups of tourists in close succession. Gradually, ADRA's development plans were forgotten. Relocation and some financial support were all that remained. The Sua continued to hang around, waiting for their film call up. The word never came, and some of the older Sua, who did not participate in the tourist spectacle, moved back to their previous locations. Finally, the film was cancelled and ADRA decided to pull out after only 18 months of involvement. The clinic was never built. As a final parting shot, ADRA arranged for two of the Sua to visit the Abayanda of Kisoro, who were also being developed. Crudely, Bambuti was shown how to become Batwa.

To add to this, only a few months after the relocation, the Semuliki Forest was turned into a National Park. No doubt the timing of this was coincidental. However, the Sua's access to the forest became limited. Uganda Wildlife Authority has continually maintained to me that they should not be prevented access, but this central edict does not filter down into local practice. Each successive Chief Park Warden has his own interpretation of the rules in relation to the Sua. In October, 1998, the then Chief Warden told me that subsistence use of forest resources by the Sua was allowable but commercial use was not. What he could not explain to me was where the sustainable stopped and the commercial began. This Warden's position was fundamentally decent. The same cannot be said for some of his predecessors, who have effectively warned the Sua off.

By the time the Sua had all returned to their familiar dwelling areas, the tawdry nature of the ADRA project was becoming a popular concern. In 1996, newspaper reports (*New Vision*, 31/08/1996 & 15/09/1996) claimed that many of the Sua had died during the relocation. Their population was reported to have fallen from about 150 to 68. Simply put, this is not true. Whatever else ADRA did, it was not responsible for multiple deaths. To the best of my knowledge, only 3 died during the 18 months. UWA denied any culpability for their role in the debacle, blaming ADRA for inappropriate development and for enticing the Sua from the forest. They publicly stated that the Sua could return to the Park (*New Vision*, 31/08/1996 & 15/09/1996), although, as I have already said, this is not the case. ADRA was shamed into a response. They reconstructed the tin roof huts at Ntandi, within a small area of allocated land. This camp is some 200 metres from the forest edge, and the Sua move down to the forest edge throughout the day. There, they wait for the few tourists who venture down between the lulls in the civil war, and harvest a few of the forest's produce, such as fish and palm nuts.

Throughout this recount of the ADRA project, the Sua have appeared powerless and in a position of extreme weakness. As Kabanankye (1997: 41) writes of the Abayanda, “the pygmies must choicelessly admit new changes.” My own understanding of the Sua does not cast them in the same light. Although highly marginalized, the Sua are not passive, employing a defensive response that I have called reflective ethnicity. By this, I mean that they deliberately provide a reflection of what others want them to be, defusing the situations that develop around them by taking on the roles that others expect of them. A simple example of this can be found among the names of Daniel Rajab Bunga, one of the few surviving members of the older generation of Sua and head of the second ranking family in the Sua hierarchy. The name Daniel was taken to appease the local Adventists who have been trying to help the Sua since 1985. Rajab, on the other hand, was adopted to please the local Muslims. According to the man himself, he took these names to solidify his relations with others, with the hope of also receiving some material gain. There was no actual intention to convert to either religion or to seek spiritual gain. His name remains Bunga to both himself and his fellow Sua. In the light of this, the Sua’s move to the ADRA camp can be seen as an active choice on their behalf, making the most of a rare opportunity. When the chance had gone, the Sua moved on.

The death of Costa Kizabange, at the ADRA camp, provides another example of this reflective ethnicity, only this time, a little more complex. Kizabange had been unwell for some time, but, one day, his condition rapidly declined. At the behest of the local Adventists, he was taken first to the local health centre. Here, he was provided with aspirin, but his condition showed no signs of improvement. At the suggestion of their Amba neighbours, the Sua then took Kizabange to the local healer. Despite the healer’s best efforts, Kizabange slipped into a coma and, although the Amba protested, the Sua took their ailing leader back to their village. The time for acquiescence was over. It was in this village that he died, with his family around him. The reactions of the other Sua was to follow their own patterns of mourning, including a roadblock at which they raised a levy towards Kizabange’s wake from their neighbours. Other elements of the mourning were considerably more reflective. The funeral was arranged by an Adventist, as was the feast to celebrate the end of the mourning period. However, the ritual bathing by the men, before the feast, was instigated by an Amba, and the transferal of power to Kizabange’s son, Nzito, immediately after, was stage managed by and along Amba patterns.

In both of these examples, we can see the Sua navigating between a series of levels, clinging to their own identity, while, at the same time, putting on the mask of other peoples desires for them. This masking is not only in response to the wishes of Amba, Muslims and missionaries, but also to the government, conservation agencies and tourists. The forest people are the mirror people, reflecting back the image of least confrontation in an attempt to gain the best advantage a situation can offer. This is evident in Nzito’s joining of the Uganda Peoples Defense Force to fight the ADF. Rumours of the Sua’s collaboration with the ADF have circulated since the conflict began, in 1996. Through joining up, Nzito was trying to make a political statement. The last time I saw him was in May, 1999, when we were both

interviewed by the Voice of Toro radio station. During this interview, Nzito spoke of his people's support for the government and desire to help defeat the ADF. Sadly, this act of political maturity has not proven beneficial. It has not provided the defense hoped for, and Nzito was recently arrested and tortured on suspicion of being an ADF member. He was soon released, but for a time, the distrust of Pygmies, of difference, was stronger than his reflection.

Perhaps the most impressive example of reflective ethnicity can be found among the Twa of Rwanda. A member of the Association for the Promotion of the Batwa feeds us back our own myth: "Our ancestors were the first to occupy this territory, which was all forest. Their dependence was on hunting and tuber collecting. Their happiness and amusement in their eco-systems plus the sufficiency of resources from the ecological surroundings, were disrupted by the land-tillers who came second, brutally destroying the natural greenery in greed for crop planting" (Uwiragiye, 1993: 173). This quote contains all the elements the myth of the authentic Pygmy; indigeneity; environmental consciousness; sustainable use; and original affluence. The Twa return our own fantasy back to us, imbuing it with our own fears about the destructive powers of progress. As such, the act of mirroring the myth actually creates a powerful identity of difference. Reflective ethnicity, in this sense, is no longer a defensive strategy. It is a powerful political tool and a means to self-determination.

## CONCLUSION

Very real change has come to "Pigmy Land," change in which the Sua and other Pygmies actively shed some cultural practices while adopting others. In relation to the Baka Pygmies of Southeastern Cameroon, Tsuru (1998: 81) has stated that they are "torn between modernization and tradition, struggling to create their new ritual tradition." In this case, tradition is not a static entity, it is not a prior given. Rather, it is fluid, constantly being remade anew in the face of changing circumstances. The eastern Pygmies of Africa are faced with a similar tension between the past and the future, and a range of responses to this situation is beginning to emerge. At one end of a continuum there is what Grinker (1994) has described the voluntary endosociality of Efe Pygmies (both with and from the Lese). Here, a conscious decision has been taken to reject, or disidentify, with the expectations of the commercial world and retreat into a relative isolation. The forest is, in this sense, a refuge. However, as the polar opposite to this, the practice of sedentarism could also be seen as an expression of preference, a way of identifying with change. While some may chose the endosocial route, others may follow a more exosocial path that leads them into a more inclusive relationship with the world. It is in opting for the exosocial end of this continuum that the navigational skills of reflective ethnicity come to the fore. For the Sua, the provision of seemingly passive reflections enables them to maximize their limited choices and to move between the multiple levels of their existence.

This paper is only a tentative beginning in trying to find a way beyond the language of authenticity that provides the vocabulary for our knowledge of Pygmies.



I do not mean to negate the work of others, but by demonstrating how the anthropology of Pygmies has excluded tourism, I hope to have shown the extent to which this has resulted in only a partial understanding. Tourism, both directly and as a broader metaphor for change, has been present in the lives of Mbuti, Twa and Sua for a longer period of time than anthropology. As an active agent within the rain-forest, tourism has already had a significant impact over the last 100 years and this history must be taken into account. The Pygmies have been drawn progressively into a wider world that spans out from the level of individual relations, through local, regional and national levels, all the way out to the international arena. Large numbers of Pygmies, in some cases the whole of a localized population, have been drawn into the global economy as active participants in the tourism business. In some instances, these may only have been temporary disjunctures, but at Epulu, the academic research centre in the Ituri and the home to Turnbull's creation, it became a permanent conjunction, broken only by war. The same is also true for the Semuliki Sua, the prime example of vagabondage.

To perpetuate the exclusionary practices of past anthropologists only encourages the continuation of the myth of the authentic, and its counterpart, the anti-myth of extinction. In the same way that the "nature" of the Ituri forest must be understood as "the outcome of a complex ecological history involving the interaction of humans (Mbuti and villager alike) and other species" (Ichikawa, 1996: 488), so must the "culture" be understood as an outcome of the panoply of human relations. We can no longer remain in the imagined space of the authentic Pygmy. At a time when the areas I have been referring to are, once again, beset by war, the human environment, in its broadest terms, cannot be excluded any longer. For peoples like the Sua, the Epulu and Mount Hoyo Mbuti, and the Kivu Twa, failure to do so leaves them imprisoned within the myth of the "forest people," oscillating between authenticity and vagabondage.

#### NOTE

This is an extended version of the paper "Post-foraging in the tourist's world," given at the 8th International conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies, Osaka, October 26-30, 1998. Information on the Sua is drawn from the 3 visits I have made to the Semuliki valley. First, in 1990, as a tourist; second, between July - August, 1994, when carrying out preliminary fieldwork; and third, on visits between November, 1997, and June, 1999, while I was carrying out research towards my Phd. I would like to thank the Economic and Social Research Council, the James A. Swan Fund and the Emslie Horniman Scholarship Fund for their financial support of my Phd research.

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