

RETHINKING METHODS AND CONCEPTS OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES ON AFRICAN PYGMIES' WORLD VIEW: THE CREATOR-GOD AND THE DEAD

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ABSTRACT The fact that there is no evidence of a creator-god, whose existence was claimed by Schebesta, in the beliefs of the Mbuti Pygmies, a large group of African pygmies, is confirmed by the observations of the present author and other researchers. The reason why Schebesta made up the creator-god is explored and described; he was under the strong influence of W. Schmidt's theory of primitive monotheism, and he was a Christian priest. Instead, the importance of the ancestors, or the dead, for the pygmies' world view is shown with examples from the Efe, Mbuti, Baka, and Aka Pygmies. Lastly two theoretical issues of religious anthropology are pointed out; because many researchers fail to understand the relationship between names and concepts of "supernatural beings," they are inclined to make up a supreme being or a creator-god to resolve the contradiction; researchers often use terms such as "god" and "spirit" without considering that they are imposing Western dichotomy upon the world view of the people they study.

Key Words: African pygmies; Supreme being; Creator-god; Ancestor; Religion; Paul Schebesta

IN QUESTION: THE CREATOR-GOD IN THE MBUTI PYGMIES' WORLD VIEW

John S. Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* is one of the famous textbooks in this discipline. Full of citations from an extensive bibliography, it has been reprinted many times and exerts a great influence on readers of various backgrounds. Of course the religion of the Mbuti Pygmies in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo, (DRC, former Zaire) is also mentioned in this book. Mbiti writes, "The Bambuti [plural form of Mbuti; note by the present author] think that God 'was the First, Who had always been in existence, and would never die' " (Mbiti, 1989: 33). The sentence in single quotations is cited from a book written by Paul Schebesta. Based on his informant's statement, Schebesta wrote, "Epilipili ... appears as the 'Creator-God' ... Epilipili was the first, who had always been in existence, ... Epilipili had created all things." (Schebesta, 1936b: 172). There is no other ground but Schebesta's writing for Mbiti to claim that the "Supreme Being" undoubtedly exists in the Mbuti religious belief.

Schebesta was clearly convinced that the Mbuti believed in a Creator-God. In the same book, he wrote:

The idea suggests itself to one that the conception of the Deity was formerly much more definite in the minds of the pygmies, and has only become dimmed by other beings very gradually. In the original conception the creator-God is without a name, and simply called "Father" or "Grandfather." But in the course of time his divine attributes have been transferred to the founder or ancestor of the race, or even to the Moon, all of whom play a more important part in the mythology of the pygmies than does the Godhead Himself, and have largely superseded Him. (Schebesta, 1936b: 171).

Anton Vorbichler, a linguist, is one of Schebesta's students and collected many oral narratives of the Efe, a subgroup of the Mbuti. He also confidently affirmed the belief in the existence of a creator-god among the Efe. According to him, Efe men call out to this god when they are going into the forest for hunting, "Oh, God! May it not rain, may no storm come!" (Vorbichler, 1980: 175-176) [original in German; translation by the present author]. He also writes that the Efe believe that this forest god created the earth and mankind.

I do not agree with Mbiti nor Schebesta nor Vorbichler on the existence of the creator-god among the Mbuti because Japanese researchers including me have not heard anything about a creator-god from the Mbuti since the 1970s. Harako was the first Japanese researcher who studied the Mbuti's world view in some detail. He could find no supreme being, no creator-god (Harako, 1984). Harako knew Schebesta's works very well, but I think the Mbuti themselves did not talk to him about these deities, as they did not to me. In this paper, I shall give an outline of the Efe's world view to show some evidence against Schebesta's theory of the creator-god. Then I will suggest why Schebesta and others misinterpreted the Mbuti's world view. I will show examples from various African pygmies that stress the outstanding importance of the dead, instead of a creator-god, in their religious belief. Lastly, I will point out several methodological and conceptual problems in the study of African world view in general.

THE WORLD VIEW OF THE EFE: ABUNDANCE OF THE DEAD

In my recent papers about the world view of the Efe (Sawada, 1998; 1999; 2000) I argued that one of the most important characteristics of their religious life is the lack of specific rituals for worshipped beings. In other words, an observer has little opportunity to interpret their world view from symbols used explicitly in ritual. Therefore it becomes necessary to induce the world view underlying the Efe's thoughts and beliefs from actual scenes of their everyday life. I am preparing a detailed paper on this aspect, but in the present article I will only present its outline in order to clarify the essential reasons why I do not agree with Schebesta's assertion.

The Efe's idea on life after death is completely different from that of Christians. Efe people have a clear answer to the question where they will go after their death. Most of them would immediately reply, "I will go to the forest," or "I will live deep in the forest." I have never been given the answer that they will go to God, even though they know about the Christian paradise, owing to long missionary

activities. Moreover, Efe people have a different idea of the way of life after death. That is to say, they believe they will live in the same way they do before their death. The forest where the dead live is not in some other world nor in heaven nor in hell. The land of the dead is situated deep in the forest, but still in the same forest which the living Efe usually use. Even after their death, the Efe maintain the same way of life and continue to make a "living" in the same forest.

This idea of "life after death" is the core of the Efe's world view. Though there are no rituals for ancestor worship nor prayers for the ancestors' help, we find exchanges between the living and the dead in various scenes of their life. For example, deep in the forest the Efe occasionally hear strange, but human-like voices and see human-like figures, both of which are attributed to the dead. Some of them have heard cock cries from the top of a hill where a village of the dead is believed to be. Furthermore, they claim to have heard angry voices from its top saying, "Do not draw nearer!" when they were at the foot of the hill.

The Efe's dream experiences they tell me are often easy to understand. However, it deserves special notice that they often report dreams in which the dead vividly appear. In one dream, an Efe woman visited the hut of her late parents and was told to go back home. An Efe man dreamed that he was drinking with his late uncle. The dead uncle said to him, "I live in another village now," and disappeared. Of course this village mentioned must be a village of the dead.

Sometimes the dead give some technical advice to the living. Some Efe men learn how to make poisoned arrows to kill monkeys from the dead in their dreams. The dead also teach the living how to make medicine to increase the harvest of palm wine. According to the Efe, there is no way to learn the preparation methods for poisoned arrows and special medicines, but being taught such knowledge in one's dream or buying it from someone else who experienced such a dream.

The music of the African pygmies, including the Efe, has been generally known for the beauty and complexity of their chorus, most of which is sung with their dance. The Efe prefer their chorus to that of other ethnic groups. They are very proud of it. Their dance was famous even in ancient times. An old document from an ancient monarchy of Egypt states that pygmies were brought to the palace to show their dancing. They were called "Dancers of God." The Efe claim that they were taught almost all of their singing and dancing by the dead in their dreams. While there are few old tunes, whose origins are not known to the present Efe, most tunes are known to have been dreamt in recent decades.

Life after death remains the same as life before death, and the singing and dancing in the life before death is copied from that in the life after death. Is life after death thus a mirror of life before death, and vice versa? It seems to me that the Efe consider the life after death as primary and more authentic because the dead in dreams sometimes give the living a lecture on the proper way of life. In the dream of an Efe man his late father appeared and told him, "These days you haven't been working hard in the forest to hunt animals and collect wild plants. The only proper way of life for an Efe is to work in the forest." According to the dreamer, he was given this advice because he and his relatives frequently went to help farmers to cultivate crops and thus deviated from their "proper way of life."

Even in this remote area, the Efe cannot live without being influenced by the regional and national economy. They know there are several alternative subsistence strategies open to them, such as shifting cultivation, working in provincial cities, alluvial mining, etc. But, they have persistently resisted these alternatives, including the Western way of life. This resistance may involve various factors, ranging from economic to ideological ones, but I would – rather intuitively – like to propose that the following reason is the most essential: For the Efe, life after death is so authentic that the dead can give the living advice to the effect that the latter feel compelled to follow the life of the ancestors. Because the vivid image of ideal life is repeatedly recalled by the dead, the Efe refuse to adopt another way of life. In other words, their resistance is backed up by a profound fear that if they work and live “out of the forest,” they will be deprived of their destination after death.

Nothing cannot be emphasized more than the importance of the dead for the Efe world view. This critical point, of course, entails, that the Efe world view is best characterized by the *absence* of God in the sense of monotheism. During interviews with the Efe I have never heard about their own creator-god, and never found myths or legends concerning it. When you ask them who made trees, rivers, hills, and the sky, they will usually reply, “We don’t know.” If you, however, insist that an appropriate answer should be given, they may tell you, “Our father in the sky made them.” If you then ask them the name of this father, they will say, “Jesus,” or “Christ.” I think the Efe do not need a principle to explain the creation of the world from nothing because, for them, the forest, rivers, the sky, etc., are given a priori.

In the following section I will attempt to demonstrate why Schebesta and Vorbichler believed to have found a Creator-God among the Efe, although no evidence whatsoever can be found in their own discourse as well as in their everyday practice. More straightforwardly, I will explain why the two researchers wanted to find it so eagerly and probably finally invented it by themselves, as I believe.

THE THEORY OF PRIMITIVE MONOTHEISM AND THE CREATOR-GOD OF THE PYGMIES

Wilhelm Schmidt, a German ethnologist known for his theory of culture history, believed that the pygmies of Africa and Asia represent the oldest stage of human development, still accessible to ethnology (Schmidt, 1971: 190-191 [originally published in 1931]), and therefore pointed out the importance of studies on their religion. He wrote that they clearly acknowledge and worship a supreme being, which they think to be the creator and sovereign lord of the whole world. All other supernatural beings are considered to be far inferior and invariably subject to him (Schmidt, 1971: 191).

Based on these observations he established his famous theory of primitive monotheism: monotheism is not the end result of the evolution of religion, but it already existed at the very start of the development of humanity. Only later was it joined by “animism,” “ancestor worship,” “polytheism,” etc. Thus Schmidt’s theory of

primitive monotheism heavily relied on the studies of the pygmies' religion. How did Schmidt get his data? He wrote on African pygmies, "till a short time ago, our information concerning these African Pygmies in particular was but scanty: but thanks to the investigations of [...] and Schebesta in the Congo, we know to-day that the Supreme Being is presented clearly and abundantly" (Schmidt, 1971: 258). He had access to Schebesta's data because the latter was Schmidt's student.

Schebesta first visited the Ituri region of the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) in 1929 because "[f]rom a theoretical point of view he felt the necessity to become acquainted with the African representatives of Schmidt's circle of primal cultures" (Dupré, 1999: 135). He revisited the same region in 1934, 1949, and 1954. At the last visit he was accompanied by one of his students, Anton Vorbichler (Dupré, 1999: 134-136).

The first professional study on the Mbuti was started by Schebesta under the strong influence of Schmidt's theory of primitive monotheism. Vorbichler then followed him. I already cited Schebesta's remark in the first section, "The idea suggests itself to one that ..." (Schebesta, 1936b: 171). This sentence is beautifully consistent with Schmidt's theory. We should note, however, that this account was not given by the Mbuti themselves nor did Schebesta infer it from historical records. It is simply his own speculation. I think he chose a wrong path and constructed a wrong theory, even though he himself repeatedly visited the Mbuti, stayed in their camps, collected exhaustive information, and "loved" them.

Above all, special attention should be paid to the Christian background of the mentioned scholars. Schmidt, Schebesta, and Vorbichler were all Catholic priests and they, I think, could not therefore deny the universality of the essential constituents of Christianity, such as the supreme being, the creator-god, etc. As Okot p'Bitek wrote, "The Christian apologists [...] address their works mainly to Western scholars and churchmen. They use African deities to prove that the Christian God does exist, and is known also among African peoples" (p'Bitek, 1971a: 41). Schebesta might have also tried to find the Christian god or supreme being among the Mbuti and the Efe.

This kind of distortion has been an endemic disease in the study of African religions. p'Bitek denounces Mbiti as follows;

The African nationalists like [...] John Mbiti protest vigorously against any Western scholar who describes African cultures and religions in disparaging terms. Their works are mainly addressed to the unbelieving Europeans, and they attempt to show that the African peoples were as civilized as the Western peoples. They dress up African deities with Hellenic robes and parade them before the Western world. (p'Bitek, 1971a: 41)

Robin Horton also notes that some scholars, such as Evans-Pritchard, Victor Turner, and Mbiti can be commonly characterized: [the sentence goes on ...]

by a methodological and theological framework which has been strongly influenced, first and foremost by their own Christian faith, but also by a long tradition of comparative studies of religion carried out by Christian theologians. (Horton, 1993: 161).

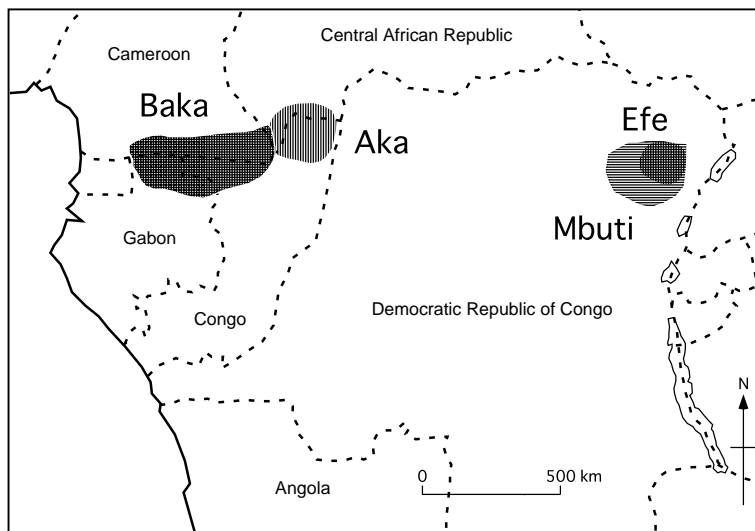


Fig. 1. Large groups of African pygmies.

The supreme being or creator-god among the Mbuti was thus invented under the strong influence of Christianity in the disguise of the academic theory of “primitive monotheism.” Now we know why Japanese researchers, many of whom are not Christians, have not found a supreme being nor a creator-god among the Mbuti.

In the second section I have stressed the importance of the dead for the Efe world view. In the next passage, I shall examine several ethnological examples throwing light on the dead’s role among African pygmies in general, including the Mbuti.

THE DEAD AMONG AFRICAN PYGMIES

There are various groups of African pygmies living in the tropical rain forest, such as the Baka in western Congo and Cameroon, the Aka in the Central African Republic and in northern Congo, the Twa in the western DRC and in western Uganda, and the Mbuti in the Ituri Forest in the northeastern DRC. Among these groups, research on their world view has been carried out on the Mbuti in the DRC (Schebesta, 1933; 1936a; 1936b; Turnbull, 1965; Vorbichler, 1977; 1978a; 1978b; 1980; Harako, 1984; Sawada, 1990; 1998), on the Baka in Cameroon (Joiris, 1996), and on the Aka in Central Africa and northern Congo (Bahuchet & Thomas, 1991a; 1991b; Takeuchi, 1995).

The Mbuti, the Baka, and the Aka live isolated from each other. The Mbuti particularly have long been isolated from the latter two groups (Fig. 1). Although some of the African pygmies have settled down to live on agriculture, at least until recently they lived a hunting-and-gathering way of life. Because it would be too much to list all information concerning their world view, I focus my attention on the information concerning hunting, which not only constitutes their major

subsistence activity, but also characterizes their culture in various ways. I will use terms such as "god" and "spirit(s)" in quotation marks, as I do not agree with the use of such abstract terms for referring to "supernormal" or after-death beings in their world view. I will return to discuss this issue in the last section.

I. Contact with "Spirits" in Hunting

Only few hunting rituals can be observed among the Mbuti. Lighting a fire before the hunt, which some researchers regard as a ritual, is called "kungya". However, we have no evidence that "kungya" has something to do with "spirits." Although the Mbuti foretell the results of hunting by oneiromancy, a way of divination through dreams (Harako, 1984: 145), it is not known whether they consider the message of the divination to come from any "spirits" or not. Vorbichler reports that on the way to hunting, Mbuti men call "God" to ask for successful hunting (Vorbichler, 1980: 175). After a series of unsuccessful hunting, they make an offering to the forest "God" (Vorbichler, 1980: 174). Generally speaking, however, there are fewer hunting-related rituals among the Mbuti than among the Baka and the Aka.

Among the Baka, only specialists, who inherited the guardianship of the "spirits" or acquired the guardianship in exchange for a close relative's life, can have contact with the "spirits" and conduct hunting rituals. Joiris calls such specialists "initiates." "Initiates" conduct healing and hunting rituals, both of which include oneiromancy and divination such as interpreting smoke and fire (Joiris, 1996: 252-253).

[Before the hunt, an "initiate"] can 'read' a fire [...] or interpret dreams in which the spirit appears [...]. He goes into a light trance, when his gaze crosses that of a spirit [...]. The initiate then indicates the direction hunters should follow either by speaking or by falling down in such a way that his body points in the right direction. (Joiris, 1996: 263)

The word "spirit" here indicates the "spirit" of the dead. The point is that the dead help the living to kill game.

The Aka also have rituals mainly directed to ancestor "spirits," or the dead, for success in hunting (Bahuchet & Thomas, 1991a: 181; Takeuchi, 1995: 73). The ancestor "spirits" of the Aka determine whether to grant game to the living or not (Bahuchet & Thomas, 1991a: 128; Takeuchi, 1995: 69). The Aka ritual of honey-gathering is also directed to ancestor "spirits" (Bahuchet & Thomas, 1991b: 172).

In sum, while there are only scattered reports on the hunting rituals of the Mbuti, the rituals of the Baka and the Aka are clearly directed to their ancestors' "spirits," or the dead, who grant them game.

II. Animal “Spirits” and Reincarnation

The Aka seem to distinguish “spirits” of human origin from “spirits” of animal origin (Bahuchet & Thomas, 1991a: 125; Joiris, 1996: 272), although the latter are not known among the Mbuti and the Baka. The Aka know “spirits” of elephants, gorillas, bongos, etc. (Joiris, 1996: 272), and these animal “spirits” are not dangerous to humans. Before the hunt, the Aka perform rituals, in which they pray to animal “spirits” for a successful hunt. The “spirits” give the hunters the power to avoid danger and not to be seen by the game during hunting (Bahuchet & Thomas, 1991a: 126). Then expiation is made for the “spirits” of hunted animals (Bahuchet & Thomas, 1991b: 184). Takeuchi did not refer to animal “spirits,” but he reported an interesting case among the Aka: in the dream of an Aka man, an aardvark appeared, which he killed. The aardvark said to him, “You, remain in this life,” and disappeared (Takeuchi, 1995: 69).

The Aka clearly have the notion of reincarnation, while there is no report on this idea among the Mbuti and the Baka. The Aka say that human “spirits” can be reincarnated as animals, often as elephants (Bahuchet & Thomas, 1991a: 125). However, it is unclear whether pygmies believe that the “spirits” of animals can be reincarnated as human beings. Takeuchi also reported that, according to the Aka in northeastern Congo, all mammals of the forest, some insects, and some fish were formerly Aka, that means, the Aka of ancient times are the ancestors of these animals. But nowadays, at death, the Aka and their game move on from this life to the next life, returning as the same species they were before their death (Takeuchi, 1995: 69). Takeuchi, however, does not refer to reincarnation at the present from animals to human beings and vice versa.

Both Bahuchet’s and Takeuchi’s reports in the Aka reincarnation beliefs essentially share the same implication that animals and humans originally stem from the same roots. While ancestor “spirits” of the Aka determine whether to grant game to the living people or not, “spirits” of animal origin also help the living people to hunt game. Both kinds of “spirits,” namely ancestor “spirits” and animal “spirits,” resemble each other in the function of helping to secure game. And as human beings can be reincarnated as animals according to Bahuchet and Thomas (1991a: 125), it seems more and more difficult to distinguish between these two kinds of “spirits.” Or can we assume that these are actually the same kinds of beings? Further studies on this issue are necessary to clarify the distinction between the two categories of “spirits.”

III. Game “Spirits”

Game “spirits” here “spirits” who accompany animals and are not to be confused with “spirits” of animal origin referred to in the previous section. Game “spirits” or similar “spirits” are known among the Mbuti, the Baka, and the Aka.

As cited by Harako, among a subgroup of the Mbuti in the DRC, the hunters describe “baketi” as follows:

"Baketi" lead a herd of game. [...] Just in front of a running animal, a short "baketi" is also running. When the "baketi" stops, the animal stops, too. When the "baketi" suddenly changes its mind and dodges, the animal, which is aimed at by the hunters, also changes its direction and runs away. When the "baketi" stops before a trap and avoids it, the animal also follows the "baketi." (Harako, 1984: 152)

The "baketi" of the Mbuti resemble the game "spirits" of the Baka, which will be described below, because both always move with animals.

The Efe, another subgroup of the Mbuti, believe that a governor of all mammals in the forest exists, who determines which animal will be killed by hunters and which one will be caught in a trap. The Efe tell stories of encounters with such a governor, in particular during the elephant hunt. The following is a narration I was told, in which Efe men heard a strange voice during an elephant hunt.

A long time ago, when all of us were young, we went to hunt elephants with spears. We found an elephant. One of us approached the elephant. The elephant saw him and ran away. The man ran after the animal and thrust his spear into its hind leg. Another man came and speared another leg of the elephant. When we were going to spear once again, we heard a strange voice from behind us. The voice said, "Do not thrust at my goat!"

We gathered and asked each other who had voiced the words. We did not know. Then we began to pursue the elephant again. The strange voice said again, "Why do you chase my goat? Give it up!" We gathered again and said, "Let's give up the elephant. If we keep on chasing it, we will face big trouble." We began to return to the hunting camp.

The Efe say that "tore," who keeps elephants, told them to stop hunting. Although the hunters did not see "tore," they could feel that the keeper of elephants got angry. Some Efe say that the dead themselves are "tore." Other Efe say that the dead metamorphose into "tore."

Among the Baka, game "spirits" have anthropomorphic figures. "They are of human, not animal origin [...] Only initiates and members of their family metamorphose into game spirits" (Joiris, 1996: 256). And "as in many other hunting societies, [the game spirits; note by the present author] are said to walk side by side with the game and thereby guide the hunters" (Joiris, 1996: 253). We should note that game "spirits" resemble the "spirits" of the deceased mentioned in the section on hunting rituals. Both help the living people hunt animals. Both kinds of "spirits" may have been primarily recognized as the same by the Baka.

Among the Aka, after the hunt, the elders offer the game's blood and internal organs to game "spirits" to show gratitude (Joiris, 1996: 272). The Aka's game "spirits" are similar to their "spirits" of animal origin, as both are always with the animals and both are given offerings after a successful hunt. Furthermore, their "spirits" of animal origin are similar to their ancestor "spirits" because both of them help the living people hunt game successfully.

As described above, both the Baka's game "spirits" and the Efe's governor of animals are anthropomorphic and have an important role in hunting. Such anthropomorphic "spirits" are widely known. The Balese, who are farmers and neighbors

of the Efe, believe in the existence of “akurupi,” who keep elephants. A Balese man told me that he had seen an “akurupi” sitting on the carcass of an elephant which he had killed. He said, “The ‘akurupi’ had a loincloth on and had black skin and black hair.” This kind of keeper of animals can be found even among peoples who are not hunter-gatherers. For example, the Hema, who are originally pastoralists and live outside of the tropical rain forest in the northeastern DRC, know “kalisa,” who is said to be black and short, with long hair. It determines, which individual animal is to be killed by human beings. If it is bored with a certain individual animal, that individual will be killed at once, either by hunters or in a trap. It is interesting that there is no keeper “spirit” for domesticated animals, such as cattle, which the Hema keep. The Hema say, “Human beings keep domesticated animals. ‘Kalisa’ keeps wild animals.”

IV. The Importance of the Dead

I have discussed several aspects of African pygmy world view. The Aka pray to ancestor “spirits” for successful hunting. The Aka’s “spirits” of animal origin resemble their ancestor “spirits” because both help the living people to kill animals. Moreover, their “spirits” of animal origin can be regarded as some kind of ancestor “spirits” because “spirits” of human origin are sometimes reincarnated as animals, and the Aka are said to have been the ancestors of most of the game. Game “spirits” and ancestor “spirits” among the Baka, the Aka, and the Efe also share the common characteristics that both are anthropomorphic and play an important role in hunting.

Thus, among these three groups of African pygmies, ancestor “spirits,” or the dead, are essential and crucial parts of their world view, having great influence on their way of hunting. Ancestors have a central role in the world view of many ethnic groups in Africa. In this respect, the African pygmies’ world view is not at all unique, but shares quite common characteristics with other ethnic groups. I suspect that researchers have exaggerated the uniqueness of African pygmies, staging some kind of competition between the pygmy culture and that of the neighboring farmers. Studying African pygmies’ world view in comparison with that of their neighboring farmers will contribute to the study of African religion in general.

As Schebesta reported on the “supreme being” or “god” among the Mbuti, scholars of African religion have thought that African pygmies have a macrocosmic view, that is, an idea of the creation of the whole world. But I have not found any “supreme being” in the Mbuti’s nor in any other African pygmies’ belief, as was described in this section. The theory of the “supreme being” among the pygmies should be corrected, as it might have been made up by researchers under the strong influence of Christianity and the theory of primitive monotheism.

METHODOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS IN THE STUDY OF AFRICAN WORLD VIEW

One of the problems in the study of African world view is that researchers tend to adopt one being as a "supreme being" or a "creator-god" and consider all the other beings as its subordinates. This might be appropriate for Christian preachers, but utterly wrong for serious researchers. Such mistakes ground on the reasons shown above. Here I want to introduce other causes of mistake. There are at least two issues concerning the correspondence between the name and the conception of a "supernatural" being, which cannot be perceived by one's senses.

These issues have been almost ignored in the study of African pygmies, especially the Mbuti. As a first example, Schebesta was told by an Efe informant that two beings, "tore" and "muri-muri," were actually the same "great spirit to whom the souls of all dead men went" (Schebesta, 1933: 237). However, another Efe claimed that "tore" was the "supreme being in heaven," while "muri-muri" was a "strange mysterious creature of the forest" (Schebesta, 1933: 238). Schebesta therefore introduced these two contradictory opinions. One said "tore" and "muri-muri" were the same, while the other one said they were different. However, in my research area I was told that the category of "tore" includes that of "murimuri." Consequently, "murimuri" can be sometimes called "tore" and the Efe know from the context whether the word "tore" actually means "murimuri" or not.

Secondly, beings of separate categories can be called by the same name, even if one does not include the other. According to Vorbichler, "bari," the "supreme creator" of the Efe in the eastern part of the Ituri forest, has wings, lives in the moon, and is a trickster (Vorbichler, 1978b: 164-165). According to Harako, who studied the Mbuti, earthquakes occur when "baketi" runs around underground. "Baketi" also gives game animals to human beings (Harako, 1984: 152). I doubt that even Mbuti people themselves hold a fixed image of "bari" and "baketi," which combine these different characteristics.

I think it possible that both the words "bari" and "baketi" include several different concepts. Two or more concepts could have the same name. For example, in Japanese, "hotoke" means not only "Buddha," the founder of Buddhism, but also "corpse." The Japanese word "hotoke" contains at least these two separate concepts. If a Japanese folklorist did not distinguish them, his work on Japanese folklore would naturally be regarded as nonsense. In my research area, "tore" could mean "murimuri" as well as "dead people."

These problems have been discussed in the study of African world view. Even Evans-Pritchard admitted difficulties concerning the names and concepts in his book, *Nuer Religion* (Evans-Pritchard, 1956: vi). Here I would like to present the controversy about the nature of "jok" among the Nilotes. Lienhardt states in his book on the religion of the Dinka people that "Divinity and divinities belong to that widest class of ultra-human agency collectively called, in Dinka, jok, Power. [...] Jok as a noun may refer to a particular ultra-human Power." (Lienhardt, 1961: 31). On the other hand, p'Bitek writes:

Like the Anglo-Saxon word *god*, *jok* of the Nilotes is a class word. The Nilotes do not speak of *jok* without adding the “proper name” or specifying clearly the category and also the particular *jok* they have in mind. [...] When the Nilotes encounter *jok*, it is with a specific and named or easily definable *jok*, and not some vague “power” [...] The proper name identifies the *jok*, placing it in a specific category and social context, for action. There is no occasion when the Nilotes think of all the *jogi* (plural of *jok*) simultaneously. (p’Bitek, 1971a: 70-71).

“Power” as a supreme being is based on the misunderstanding of the correspondence between names and concepts. Lienhardt wanted to define a single concept for the term “*jok*” and finally presented the vague and incomprehensible concept of “Power.” I believe he did not imagine the possibility that the single word “*jok*” could contain several concepts, as were identified by p’Bitek, who is a native Acholi, an ethnic group of the Nilotes. Consequently, Lienhardt had to invent the discrete category of “*jok*,” that is monosemically defined as omnipotent and omnipresent power. We now understand how a supreme being can be made up by a researcher.

Several comments are necessary on the technical terms: Schebesta and Vorbichler liked to use the terms “*god*” or “*forest god*” denoting some beings in the pygmies’ world view. Recent researchers on African pygmies, however, like to use the term “*spirit*” to denote the beings which Schebesta would have called “*god*.” But what is the advantage of using the word “*spirit*” instead of “*god*”? Both terms can be understood as immaterial and free from temporal-spatial constraint. Using the term “*spirit*” implies that the pygmies believe in some material/immaterial dichotomy, which is not verified by the data these researchers have presented. Ideally, to avoid unnecessary confusion, the definition of “*spirit*” should be given before using the term as a cliché. At least, the term “*spirit*,” implicating some immaterial entity, should be used carefully because some African researchers have opposed to the usage of this term. For example, p’Bitek claimed that, for the Central Luo, entities they encountered at the lineage shrine were not “*spirits*” divorced from bodies, but ancestors as they were known before their death (p’Bitek, 1971b: 104). p’Bitek maintains that the Central Luo themselves regarded their ancestors as human beings, neither as “*spirits of the dead*” nor as “*ancestor spirits*.” One of my friends, who is an African anthropologist, told me, “I am living in the house which my late father built. Every now and then, I feel vividly that my father is living here with us.” As shown with respect to the Efe, he encounters the dead not as immaterial “*spirits*.”

The African philosopher Wiredu uses the term “*superhuman*” instead of “*supernatural*” because the latter could give the impression that a natural/supernatural dichotomy exists in the African world view. He also emphasizes that such terms as “*god*,” “*spirits*,” and “*ancestor spirits*” should be used carefully because these words are often used in a Cartesian sense of material/immaterial dichotomy, which is inappropriate to an understanding of the African world view (Wiredu, 1998). Lienhardt uses the term “*ultra-human*” for the same reason as Wiredu (Lienhardt, 1961: 28-29). According to Wiredu, ancestors should be regarded as “*quasi-physical*” beings. Although they can be seen and/or heard, the manner of their operation is not fully constrained by physical laws.

Lienhardt as well as Evans-Pritchard presented their basic terms, such as "spirit," "ultra-human power," at the beginning of their book and then started their description using these terms. I wonder, why they did not first use the people's own vernacular names and concepts to describe the indigenous world view of each ethnic group, and then analyzed them and categorized beings as "spirit," "deity," etc., if these terms were applicable. Using such general terms as "supernatural," "spirits," or "quasi-physical" before giving an ethnological description, presupposes without any concrete evidence that Western people and African people have common ground concerning the world view. This presupposition might be turn out to be true in the end, but proving this should be the goal of anthropological research, which can be attained only through studying a diversity of world views. It should not be used as the starting point, which inevitably leads to imposing our own world view on the people we try to understand.

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