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"The Pygmies Were Our Compass": Bantu and Batwa in the  
History of West Central Africa, Early Times to c. 1900 C.E.  
(review)

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policing of roads, it is evident that there was interaction at a level worth commenting on. For example, settlers on many occasions hired labor to help work on their farms. Van Beusekom notes the use of *serviteurs* who accompanied wealthier families, and she also distinguishes between settlers who were poorer or wealthier than others, but it would have been fascinating if she had explored these issues further.

Van Beusekom suggests that international agencies differ in their view of development as either a key to economic success or as a way to improve human rights, while always agreeing that development is a positive thing. This study does not claim that development is negative, but insists that any successful development project must take into account both history and local understandings of farming and technology. The author maintains that while many aspects of development projects were (and are) readily embraced by those in the “developing” world, this acceptance does not necessarily coincide with an acceptance of Western assumptions of cultural superiority. Through the story of the Office du Niger, van Beusekom shows how even if development projects are designed top down, they only work as a process of negotiation. Farmers and administrators at the Office du Niger struggled over both the meaning of development and the techniques that should be used to achieve it. This is an important case study for anyone interested in agricultural history, environmental history, or development history.

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**Kairn A. Klieman. *“The Pygmies Were Our Compass”: Bantu and Batwa in the History of West Central Africa, Early Times to c. 1900 C.E.*** Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2003. xxxiv + 253 pp. Maps. Figure. Tables. Bibliography. Index. \$26.00. Paper.

*The Pygmies Were Our Compass* is a detailed reconstruction of human interactions during the last six thousand years in an area of central Africa encompassing southern Cameroon, the continental area of Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Republic of Congo. This reconstruction was accomplished on the basis of a large amount of historical linguistic research undertaken by the author during the mid-1990s, and it stands as an extremely important contribution to our knowledge of the region. It focuses particularly upon relationships through time between Batwa hunter-forager populations, traditionally designated as “Pygmies,” and farmers (in this study, Bantu-speaking farmers) with whom Batwa groups have historically interacted in diverse ways and in a variety of cultural spheres.

Kairn Klieman wisely avoids an extended discussion of the ultimate biological origins of Pygmy populations, but concentrates rather on linguistic

and archaeological evidence for changes in Batwa–Bantu social and ideological relations through time. She proposes that during the early stages of Bantu-speaking population movements into the tropical forest in this area, between roughly 4000 B.C. and 1000 B.C., Bantu and Batwa economies were rather similar, with hunting and foraging providing the majority of community subsistence needs, and that indigenous Batwa were valued by and incorporated into immigrant communities because of their ritual and environmental knowledge. The introduction of iron-working and banana cultivation during the first millennium B.C. led to a divergence in lifestyles for the two populations, with the new technologies allowing Bantu to rely more upon agricultural production away from their original riverine settlements. At the same time, Batwa groups withdrew from some of their formerly close contacts with Bantu communities, becoming the “forest-specialists” (in Klieman’s terms) better known to modern ethnography.

After A.D. 1000, the development of state-level societies, the appearance of large-scale slave raiding, and the eventual incorporation of the region into European colonies had strong impacts on the status of different Batwa (and obviously Bantu) groups. Some Batwa groups remained relatively insulated from these processes, but in general ethnic identities became more rigid and many Batwa groups came to be increasingly dominated by their Bantu neighbors. This description of modern forager–farmer relations in a developing historical context, together with the author’s attendant critique of racialized preoccupations with “pure Pygmy” groups, is one of the strongest elements in the book.

Klieman’s text also throws into relief some of the opportunities and problems involved in combining linguistic and archaeological data in historical reconstructions. On the one hand, the sparseness of archaeological activities in this region makes historical linguistic research particularly valuable and interesting. On the other hand, these different data sources are often rather difficult to synthesize, in part because (contra Klieman, xxix) radiocarbon chronologies used by archaeologists are significantly more finely calibrated than are the (still quite controversial) glottochronologies established by historical linguists. This can lead to uncertainties in interpretation. For example, is the appearance of ceramics on Gabonese archaeological sites from the sixth millennium B.C. (53–54)—that is, two thousand years before the linguistically derived date for the migration of Bantu populations that were supposed to have brought ceramics into the area—due to interregional exchanges, the precocious migration of an “avant-garde” of Bantu settlers, or simply uncertainties in the linguistic dating of wider Bantu expansion? For this archaeologist, uncertainties associated with chronological frameworks remain the most problematic element in this otherwise fine text.

That being said, Kairn Klieman’s book provides a great deal to think about, particularly in its fine-grained and compelling account of the rich variety of relations between Bantu and Batwa communities all over the

western part of central Africa and its sensitive analysis of the ways in which these populations reconstituted each others' positions in their (to a large degree shared) ideological universes. It is a major contribution to our knowledge of the history of this region, and will be an essential reference work for historians, linguists, ethnographers, and archaeologists working in central Africa.

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**Philip Frankel. *An Ordinary Atrocity: Sharpeville and Its Massacre*.** New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. viii + 263 pp. Tables. Appendixes. Bibliography. Notes. \$30.00. Cloth.

**Henk van Woerden. *The Assassin: A Story of Race and Rage in the Land of Apartheid*.** Translated by Dan Jacobson. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001. 176 pp. \$23.00 Cloth.

These two books are concerned with South Africa during apartheid. Few developments of the period have been studied more intensively than the Sharpeville massacre. It might seem, indeed, that we do not need yet another examination of the subject. *An Ordinary Atrocity*, however, is a groundbreaking work, as good a study as I have read on any political development in modern Africa. In the four decades since it occurred, we have not had a truly comprehensive history of the massacre. The behavior and motivations of the police remain unclear, for example, and until recently the government discouraged investigations into any aspect of the affair. With few exceptions little evidence has been produced on most of those involved, and previous studies have all but ignored the forensics of the massacre. Frankel's work attempts to fill existing gaps and to reassess established theories and claims. Its aims are multiple: to compare the two diametrically opposed narratives of the event in light of historical evidence recently made available; to accord the Sharpeville community the status it deserves within apartheid history; to situate Sharpeville within the general context of twentieth-century massacres; to provide a better sociology of the massacre; and finally to consider oral evidence from participants, witnesses, and others connected to the disturbance.

The study is based on an impressive set of primary sources, including more than one hundred individual interviews and more than seventy depositions, and it incorporates much of the previous research on the subject. It is divided into three unequal parts and a postscript. The first part places Sharpeville in the context of South African history before apartheid and during its early period by considering the geographic setting, the social, economic, and environmental bases of the city, as well as public policy relat-