

# Egalitarian civilisations (Seminar)

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24/01/23

Jerome Lewis will present research tracing the long duration and resilience of a Central African hunter-gatherer 'civilisation'. This civilisation cannot be traced through archaeological evidence, but rather by combining genetic, ethnographic and ethnomusicological studies. These suggest a structural form or style that endures across different 'Pygmy' societies today despite genetic and other differences, such as speaking different languages.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qf30h0ocV8>

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Welcome to everybody. Jerome Lewis has been long-term friend of radical anthropology and needs very little introduction. He's a professor here at UCL. Anthropology department Jerome did his PhD with the late great James Woodburn who's one of the most famous of all hunter-gatherer and apologies and Jerome's had an enormous length of field work dedicated fieldwork compared to very many anthropologists in the field with the bycailey peoples and studying areas of egalitarianism.

Sharing a ritual and many aspects of evangelity society. So I'm going to Hand over to Jerome on egalitarian civilizations.

Thank you. Thank you Camilla and good evening. Everyone look very nice.

Thank you. I hope the anticipation would be rewarded. So often people think of hunter-gatherer societies as these small little groups of between 12 and perhaps 16 maximum people living in a camp hunting and Gathering making their livelihoods in the forest around them.

But the impression that gives is of just these disjointed dislocated people and it's rather a surprise. I mean there was even an anthropologist called Ron Bruton who thought that it was even remarkable that these societies should exist at all and that actually they're just sort of accidental assemblages that their cultures aren't really very intentional or have roots in mythology or symbolism or ritual in the way most cultures do have some sort of sense of continuity and identity through their cultural practices, but we're just these random assemblages and that kind of very Superficial reading of what's egalitarian hunter gatherers are is something which has been for instance replicated in when graber's recent book *The Dawn of everything* where they dismiss the many tens of thousands of years of hunter-gatherer civilizations through in different parts of the world. I would suggest as being irrelevant to thinking about how Humanity might organize its political future and I think that that's a very tragic a mission actually and that these Hunter gather a groups have a huge amount to teach us about how you can organize human communities at scale without the necessity of hierarchy and that's why I use this rather provocative terms civilization which in its sort of common usage refers to extremely hierarchical civilizations the sort that do the sorts of things that to go French philosopher or Economist argued.

Response to the indigenous critique that technological civilizations emerge because of inequality and inequalities and necessary price to pay for the free time. The Leisure that the wiser parts of those civilizations can then use to create these great architectures technological creations and so on of works of art and but what I want to talk about here is an alternative a different way of understanding human beings residing at scale over large areas and without necessarily falling prey to those rather pernicious elements of Human Social Life.

So I just need to try and keep track of both.

So, um recent genetic ethnographic and ethno musicological research on congo-based and unto gatherers reveals striking continuities between the small groups that dwell in these forests.

These lines of evidence suggest that they form a broader Central African civilization of great Antiquity, despite their contemporary linguistic Geographic and genetic differences, the continuities between these different societies point to what remains of an optimal adaptation to this region that is expressed in a structural form or style that endures across small-scale hunter-gatherer groups, which unites them into a much larger scale civilization in this talk. I'm just going to summarize elements of these continuities, but I'm going to focus on how in particular a distinctive musical style expresses and transmits ideal scenarios, the form the basis of distinctive socio aesthetic and political standards characteristic of this civilization.

I'm going to refer to these society's collectively as a civilization because of civilization does not limit a culture to one Society.

Societies are short-term phenomena compared to civilizations.

Members of this civilization refer to themselves as Forest people and they share to booze concerning blood that structure sharing and the gender division of labor.

A predatory approach to language and a distinctive musical style. They contrast themselves to people like us that they call Village People and whose hierarchical values and political structures. They reject.

This civilization is probably one of the oldest human civilization indeed as these images imply. This hunter-gatherers civilization has long fascinated people's of the Mediterranean Basin and has had a profound impact on these much shorter lived civilizations.

This interest in Central African hunter-gatherer as is speculated to go back to ancient Nubia or Somalia arriving in the form of best to the Egyptian Middle Kingdom around 5,000 years ago to become one of the most popular gods of the New Kingdom. So, of course in in Egypt as with typical civilizations, we're familiar with there was extreme hierarchy in inequality and the gods of the hierarchy are the ones that we generally assume and Associate Ibis and so on with those Elites, but actually for popular people that wasn't an accessible form of worship their worship was much more every day and best was the most popular god in ancient Egypt. If you go to the museum here, one of the most frequent artifacts, they have are various Effigies and images of best. There are hundreds of them just in the local museum at UCL here

and indeed they're found right across the Mediterranean Basin and it really is quite remarkable. I think best is probably or he's a very good candidate for the longest worshiped God of any of human Humanities Gods. It really is quite remarkable that he has been consistently present in the at least religious practices of some people since that time right up until today.

Although sorry best was a dwarf God uniquely represented face on so traditionally all those Egyptian things are sideways images but best is straightforward facing as a protector against dangerous animals and of the home, he was also the patron of childbirth fertility sexuality humor music and dancing. He became very popular with every day Egyptians because he protected women and children above all others.

Though best had no temples and there were no priests ordained in his name. He was often depicted on household items such as headboards of beds other Furniture mirrors and cosmetic containers as well as on wall paintings, especially in both houses called mamisi in ancient Egypt and as amulets and statuettes.

Worship of best spread as far north as Syria and West to Cyprus and the boheric islands and into the Greek Roman and the first Persian Empires.

Best remains popular in Ibiza today and it's quite interesting that Ibiza. If you translate it means elad the best the island of best and even today one of the principle reasons that people go to Ibiza is a pilgrimage for dance and you donik pleasures.

When European explorers in the Congo Basin first encountered the short statured Forest hunter-gatherers. They were invariably labeled pygmies after the mythical group labeled Pig moose by Homer in The Iliad. So this is the name pygmy is something which goes back very far. It's actually how measure of cloth was sold in Greek ancient Greek markets.

It was a pigment is is the length between a fist and an elbow and therefore something that's very small.

So is that think of this ethnographers studied the different groups of hunter gatherers across this region their diversity became clear as did remarkable cultural and material continuities between the more Forest orientated groups despite their widespread borrowing of languages from their farm and neighbors. This provoked one prominence ethnographer called Sergei to label this the pygmy paradox.

Given the significance that most people attribute to language as a key marker of a dense of identity. It seems paradoxical these hunter gatherers can adopt languages from their farmer neighbors, but remain distinctively pygmy.

Here, I suggest a way of explaining this Paradox on based on understanding. These different groups has constituting a civilization.

Although a civilization is classically described by Dumont for India is typically understood as a hierarchical order that encompasses societies and people's into its moral code aesthetic standards and valued practices.

Here, I present a civilization that considers hierarchy to be barbaric and this is in the language of civilizations. You have the barbarians on the extreme and the Civilized in the interior. So it's reversed in this sense that it's hierarchy.

That's barbaric and they incorporate these Central African societies. They incorporate other cultural groups as ritual dependence and consider the forest as the Civilized space. Whereas clearing such as rivers and Farms Mark the dangerous peripheries of this civilized Central space.

So propose that a civilization without hierarchy based on small-scale groups living dispersed over a huge area of forests that can exist over long periods of time may seem unlikely.

but here I want to argue that this civilization maintains order and coherence most notably through shared musical practices, but also through an ideology of blood that determines proper sharing and a set of optimal adaptations to the material constraints of living well in this Forest But doing so without identifying individuals with authority to enforce Traditions or judge or affect reject Innovations. and this is of something that's very difficult for a lot of people who've come from hierarchical civilizer or societies to understand that you can actually have systems that repeat themselves over time without the need for that overt instruction for judgment for people who determine. Yes, this is correct, and this isn't correct.

These shared practices cultivate an aesthetic sense that makes people that sorry that makes appropriate behavior feel right rather than because it's imposed by people with authority perhaps because they guide behavior in mostly unspoken ways such as such means of inculcating Conformity and transmitting culture have far greater duration over time than modes that are based on Elite power elite judgment and enforcement with its concomitant inequalities that are common in hierarchical civilizations provoke resistance rebellion, and conflict that eventually caused their fall in reflecting on what makes societies sustainable these egalitarian Congo Basin hunter-gatherers illustrate the force of soft Power by Charming their members to follow cultural patterns because of an aesthetic sense of what is good. And right that is grounded in practice is celebrating joy laughter cooperation sharing and beauty.

Estimates of the overall numbers of contemporary Congo Basin hunter-gatherers ranged from about 200 odd thousand to about 900,000.

Their composed and the reason for this is because of course nobody has ever tried being able to count these communities and the the governments of these regions just neglect and marginalized these these people they're not interested in them.

They're composed of groups speaking different languages from Bantu bangian Central sudanic traditions.

Oh, sorry language families and today they practice a range of subsistence activities from hunting and Gathering to fishing farming entertainment salaried employment day laboring and begging.

They occupy different territories and have a range of different relationships with the fact their farmer neighbors belonging to diverse ethnic groups contemporarily their differently affected by the global forces of development Market expansion conservation logging mining Plantation economies, and in some places chronic arm to conflict.

Over historical time contacts between hunter-gatherers and group hunter-gatherer groups and Farmers have been very unevenly distributed in time and space and they've always been partial since the numbers of people have been so small the expanses so vast and population densities. So low, Today there exists great variation in hunter-gatherer relations with Farmers many try in Rwanda over in the East and Burundi and now they are now landless squatters and vassals of agricultural groups who've occupied their ancestral forests and covered them in plantations.

Central tribes and reward groups in DRC are losing their forests to Rapid Migration by Farmers fleeing armed conflict in the east of DRC.

Backers in Cameroon are increasingly being forcibly sedentized and forbidden to access good forests for hunting and Gathering.

Then Benelli I lived with in Congo successively established and broke off relations with three farmer groups in the 25–30 years. I've known them.

They explained to me that the first the farmers are generous and friendly But as time goes by they become increasingly dependent on and benjali labor and as their dependencies increase their techniques become more coercive and discriminatory techniques for securing Benji labor. And so then bengalia abandoned them and find other Farmers, there's evidence from early colonial times suggesting that this in the past when Forest was more accessible. This was a more typical pattern of interaction between the farmers and the hunter-gatherers.

All Define themselves as current or former Forest hunter-gatherer Specialists and recognize their shared ancestry as the indigenous people of central Africa.

They still participate in polyphonic music despite significant differences in types of mountains and varieties performed.

So some communities use pipes to do polyphonic pipe music other communities still sing polyphonically and some Focus much more on poly rhythms through drumming and xylophones in some cases.

Their musical differences are Loosely proportional to their degree of sedentization. So the more a culturated into farmer and neighboring societies, these hunter-gatherers become the less they sing polyphonically and I think that that's a very significant observation.

In this talk, I'm going to focus on those groups still engaged in Forest hunting and gathering for the Insight. It provides on the continuities underpinning this civilization.

Societies that are part of the Central African civilization share valued practices and that focus on hunting and gathering in a remarkably successful adaptation to Forest living.

This is evidenced by a distinctive material culture the shared musical style a moral ethos that rejects hierarchy Authority and accumulation as illegitimate and an assertive egalitarian socio-esthetic which is self-consciously cultivated and deliberate.

In addition to the Huts or honey collection implements that you can see here these groups share a range of materials solutions for Forest living that include particular acts honey, collecting methods and client tree climbing methods basketry and fiber

rope techniques fiber ropes are very important part of their mystical tradition Mark slings for carrying infants, bark ways of making bark cloth for clothing and also Raffia for clothing and body decoration practices that include part plant-based jewelry plant dies and scarifications these commonalities identify Forest dwelling hunter-gatherers across the base and are evidence of a highly resilient resilient and successful Forest adaptation.

Newcomers are incorporated into their Forest orientated civilization in ways that provide the hunter-gatherers with opportunities for obtaining goods and resources or wealth that are available on the peripheries or from outside. The forest ions salts and various other things being very important goods for these hunter-gatherers.

The first inhabitants they control newcomers access to the mystical powers of the forest and the land.

Since the chief's power. So the higher the farmers incoming Farmers have Chiefs and hierarchies since the chief's power is based on his ability to bless and to curse is vital that the hunter-gatherers publicly bestow these powers on him. If he's to claim to be a chief and is very clear right across the region that big men and Chiefs always try and find hunter-gatherers who will come and bestow on them this Authority because it's it really is where they're Authority lies mugutu says Seco the former dictator of DRC that when it was called Zaire he used to whenever he would go and visit a particular part of Zaire. He actually had two airplanes one for himself and his small group and one for a big group of pygmies who would arrive before him at the airport so that when he arrives and he got off his airplane he was being greeted by singing and dancing and it was vital to his projection of power in DRC and he was an extraordinarily resilient leader.

for the for the country and In effect the newcomers social order requires the hunter-gatherers ritual services for Vital ceremonies such as in these enthronement rights for Chiefs or later as their Court Jesters. Once they were there someone who had really speak truth to power and as the suppliers of high status Forest produce such as leopard skins and other skins and ivory that Central to the symbolism of chiefly power, the newcomers' lives are dependent on these hunter-gatherers from special assistance as fertility advisors healers and midwives that enable the enable newcomers to reproduce these hunter-gatherers perform all the major life cycle rituals such as circumcision initiation funerals and the important lifting of morning ceremonies that reinstitute the social order some years after a death.

In other words the hunter-gatherers a central to the reproduction of the newcomers societies.

To illustrate this civilization. I'm going to focus on the ethnography of the byaker groups living in Western central Africa the bioca comprised of backup. Nikaya Luma AKA and Benelli and they speak both Bantu andu bangian languages.

I've conducted extensive field research within Benji for the past 30 years and have spent time with many of the other groups too. These Western groups along with the

Eastern SWA. Aswa and iffy in the aturi forest are the most Forest orientated today and provide the clearest insight into the core practices of this non hierarchical civilization.

Acidic soils and tree root growth disrupt potential archaeological sites unpredictably in this region and this undermines. This Resort has resulted in a very underdeveloped archeology in the Congo Basin though. There are of course interesting exceptions.

Recent genetic studies provide great insight into the deep Past after diverging from non-pygmyes between 110 and seventy thousand years ago. And so those groups are the San peoples of the Kalahari the hadza of East Africa and then the big news those and the bands whose diverged carried on around the forest as opposed to entering into the forest and the Proto the early pygmy groups went into the forest.

So between 110 and seventy thousand years ago, they moved into the forest and Fannin his colleagues calculate that the eastern and booty and the Western bayaka pygmies diverged approximately 44,000 years ago. So older than is described in this picture.

The reduction in Forest cover during the last glacial maximum between 30 and 12,000 years ago Consolidated the isolation between Western and Eastern ancestral pygmy populations concentrating them in Forest refuges and producing the degree of genetic and cultural diversity observed between them today.

As the forest grew again from 12,000 years ago to 3,000 years ago. The isolated hunter-gatherer groups moved out from their refuges the forest refugees.

They've been inhabiting to populate the regions. We find them in today the arrival of agricultural peoples from 5,000 years ago, but particularly from 2,800 years ago created a second period of isolation between the hunter-gatherer groups the arrival of farmers intensified from 2,800 years ago and fragmented their hunter-gatherer populations because it occurred in conjunction with a climatic crisis that caused the contraction of forest into refuges separated by vast zones of more arid, Savannah.

Um while acknowledging this history and diversity my focus here is on what they have in common.

One of the most striking examples of a shared trait. Is there unusual singing style a highly integrated non hierarchical choral yodled polyphony composed of multiple intermingling Melodies.

So when when people sing polyphony you you can't all sing the same thing. In fact, everyone has to sing a slightly different melodic module and they Interlink with one another to create a sort of grander Greater song that travels above and this is a very peculiar and unique form of singing which is common to the San in the Kalahari to the pygmies of central Africa and also to the headset and has been some people think is the sort of archaic form of Human music.

The spirit played rituals that are associated with this musical style a transacted across International boundaries between bioaka groups that speak different languages. So they they understand this system. So well that even though they speak different languages live in different countries. They will come and transact these ritual the right to perform these rituals between themselves. So just so you get a sense of what it

sounds like I'm going to play this and I'm only going to do it on one side. Sorry for you guys on Zoom just because it will create too much interference, but you'll hear it.

if So despite different languages in the dispersal in small camps or settlements for much of the Year members of these different byaker groups. Notably young people visit other biker groups to establish friendships and meet potential spouses to explore beyond their normal areas as well as to participate in commemoration ceremonies.

Where they may be initiated into the other groups Spirit plays associations.

This freedom of movement is facilitated and made possible precisely because these hunter-gatherers share so much this includes their egalitarian political ideology a memetic and predatory approach to languages. So they're constantly listening to the languages of other people and where they find a word they like they take it and they incorporated into their own speech people change their names through life if I meet somebody whose name I like I say to my friends right call me by that name now and then people will call me by that name. There's a flexibility in language which, we're not very familiar with here and I think it's partly because we're so similar to the people around us. So the French and the English you're pretty similar and identical. So what do they focus on to mark their difference? Well, they focus on language and the food they eat rather than seeing all these continuities and similarities between them go on Britannia Great. Britain says it all I think if that there's a small area of France called glitania where certain Frenchman came over to this country from so that So a mimetic and predatory approach to language and Outsiders a ritual and religious system based on the forest and this polyphonic music a set of taboos driving gender division, the gender division of labor premised on keeping menstrual blood the blood of human facility apart from the blood of killing animals.

A dynamic and dynamic gender relations in which each gender is primed and learns to undermine special claims to status by the other gender.

A rich sunglable storytelling tradition an economic ethic focused on sharing immediacy and the superiority of wild food and a similarly broad binary classification of people into Forest people and Village People.

I use the label civilization over cultural area because those who are part of the civilization are explicit about their connections and aware of their cultural continuity.

An example of this occurred in 2010 when I played a recording of them and booty music from the Eastern side of the forest made by Colin Turnbull in the 1950s to in bengelli on the western side of the forest all over a thousand miles away almost immediately with a few seconds. They said are they must be by AKA to sing like this? In the following. I want to explore why I'm Ben jealous should so quickly and strongly identify within booting musicing. Why should music be so emblematic of this civilization? To answer that question requires a bit more backgrounds. So I just want to start with the political context.

Those ladies love to sing. They've just been singing for 10 hours before that piece of film was taken. It was in the morning after an all-night session.

amazing energy while a member of such a society might achieve inequality from time to time by hunting more than others by being more charismatic or beautiful or persuasive and so on a range of practices ashore that such inequality cannot last for long we call them leveling mechanisms and they include things like demand sharing soon as you see someone with something that they're not immediately consuming you ask for some of it and you take it and it's not their right to refuse. It's your right to help yourself.

there's of course conventions and politeness involved but it's pretty strong avoidance. So rather than if you have an argument with somebody or someone says something you find particularly offensive. You don't need to confront them. You can just avoid them. You haven't got anything to protect. There's no Farms to that you depend upon so you can just leave.

Um mockery extremely important in these societies and the great experts are elderly women who have the right to really explicitly mock people who do outrageous things and because they're elderly women.

They're somehow the the although they're touching on very tense emotions and strong feelings in people because of their status as elderly women the mothers of everybody they somehow are able to get away with this and in ways which men can't do it Men start to do that it very quickly causes fights and big problems. Whereas when these elderly women do it. They somehow lots of humor in a very loving and caring way but very precise and accurate they will teach people what they're doing wrong.

Also easy access to lethal weapons.

So the fact that there are poisoned arrows lying around in Camp mean that even if you're a very weak old lady and you're being bullied by a very big man if he falls asleep and you took him in the butt with your with the poisoned arrows that really is it for him. and so that's of course. I've never seen it done. It's never happened, but just the possibility of that happening acts as a certain restraint on excessive Behavior and the fact that you might have more Broad and someone else doesn't mean that you can dominate them because there are other ways that they could hurt you.

Yeah, and so lots of practices also reject dependencies. So the idea that you can force your child to do things is unacceptable. So as soon as a child can walk they can decide where they sleep. So if a parent is unpleasant to their child or in other ways unpleasant to their partner for instance, the child can just decide no I'm I'm not sleeping with you anymore and go and sleep with a grandparents go and sleep with a cousin or with a friend or with an auntie and that acts as a big incentive to for parents to be actually very nice to their children and not do all this domineering stuff. That is so common in authoritarian society and I think is is very powerful training for those children.

Everyone has direct and on mediated access to the resources they need for life. So there's no way that I can tell somebody they can't go and exploit something that they want to exploit. It's really up to them to to do that if they so wish and there's no

one that can prevent them the skills that are required to exploit. These resources are in general widely available. So everybody from about the age of 11 or 12 is able to survive autonomously if they should want to of course, it's not so much fun to survive by yourself. So people stay in community and they shared the things that they produce um But but everybody has the key skills, they need for survival. There's certain skills, which men in particular don't like to share with women because we appreciate the women like neat so we don't want to give away all our secrets of how we kill animals particularly the big ones that have lots of fatty Meats, which is very popular with women so that they keep coming back to us for meat and honey. In fact, so we keep those secrets to ourselves and we only discuss them in particular areas called in janga, which a secret place is sacred secret places.

um and everyone's free to move as they wish so in these Society, there's no word for goodbye. You don't say goodbye. If you say anything when somebody leaves you say go and the reason is is that if goodbye is in a sense. It's like sticking a hook in someone and saying I'm going to miss you come back and that's just not acceptable in these contexts. If someone wants to leave and go somewhere else. They there's no right or ability for anybody to say. No, you mustn't go and in some cases if someone's going out to gather or going to hunt and if you say something that resembles anything like a good buy it can cause Fury from the person going out because they will interpret it as you trying to curse them or somehow cause them problems when they're in the forest later. So there are all sorts of practices we take you never say thank you for instance there really is no word for thank you. If you take something you just take it and consume it and that's enough.

So these practices are actively cultivated and imposed on individuals assertively such groups are actively fashioning their worlds in similar ways that ensure that natural differences between people are not culturally converted into differences in status Authority or rank. So granted people are different. There's no question about it. People have different skills. They have different abilities and but it's whether you culturally convert those differences into status Authority or rank, which is what these societies refuse to do. They actively reject and even someone who's a good Hunter will be discouraged from hunting if they're going off Hunting too much because that's the sign. Well, why are you trying to make us all dependent on your hunting? No, no, let other people go hunting now you go and find some honey or sit look after the children for a bit.

So I'm in just as an example a very good friend of mine. He was actually my initiation sort of guide through the the whole religious system of the bambangelion factor a lovely man extraordinary School Storyteller great elephant Hunter remarkable healer, but in his old age has become very partial to a Tipple and in fact has become a rather serious alcoholic and whenever he sees me, of course, one of the things he's fishing for is some drink and I went to back to the camp in 2019 and we were just been there a few days and when I arrive some of the alcohol Sellers from the Bantu communities the farmer communities like to arrive to start selling their Wares because they're sure that the

white man's got money and then people will be able to get drunk and pay for the alcohol. So the lady was sat down with her bottle of alcohol and feta and taken the are come on. Let's have a drink for all time.

Can when I was all the usual tricks I have for deviating and avoiding buying him alcohol. And I mean I have to give in at some point or other but you have to make it last a bit. It's too chaotic and so he sort of gave up with me. I wasn't being and he noticed that down by where the canoes come and land by the the Riverside. They had a new guy had come who'd heard that there was the white man in in the camp and was just curious to come and do a bit of Tourism and see what this white man was up to and as soon as fat I saw him he knew there's my opportunity and in the and so he grabbed them the man under the arm and started walking him up the central area of the camp today. I'm the big chief here everyone here. Look at them. They're all my my subjects. I'm a big king of the forest here. and the reason what he was doing was he was playing to the expectations of the farmer, which is when you arrive in a new place if the farmer is Chief is there as a sign of respect and conviviality you The chief a drink it's a it's a just a practice which is considered normal. And so fata was actually hauling this newcomer who sort of looking around a bit. Not sure what to do, but couldn't really resist the enthusiasm and Charisma of fata was hauling him across the village and he was sort of saw me a pass by and fast as speaking in lingala, which is the lingua Franca of the region and there were three little boys just playing in the sand. They were just fiddling around doing, nothing much under 10, and one of them looked up as fatter was dragging the the farmer along. He said he's just a drunk he's an idiot don't believe him and in Gala so that the guy could understand and I could see on the guy's face this lack of how could this little boy speak so rudely about this old man who seems so important.

He's a big chief here and this and fat I just come on don't think about it and just the banter continued and continued to and of course, he got to the lady and he got his drink and it was all successful and so any form of ranking is teased insulted rejected avoided shared out or otherwise leveled off.

Practice practices that result in differential outcomes such as hunting a carefully handled by a combination of popular vigilance and ideologies of taboo that underpin the insightful principle that continued resource abundance is assured by correctly sharing with all presents what has been produced and in contrast to the endless rubbish that we hear from our politicians here in these societies.

There's no pressure to produce. There's no special reward for producers the fact that you don't reward producers does not stop people producing. It's fun to do stuff. We don't like just sitting around all day long people like to do stuff. You don't have to constantly reward them for doing it. But in these societies there is huge popular pressure to share anything that is produced among all presents and that is where the pressure comes to bear on people's activities. So sharing is done on demand. Such sharing is not based on generosity, which is a quality of the donor, of course, but on the right of the demander to get what is not being immediately consumed.

That donor has no right to refuse the demand should they refuse their immediately subject to mockery and ridicule and if they persist to people just imagining them they'll leave them. They'll go elsewhere demands for a share are imposed on the producer by the group with such insistence that it's impossible to ignore individuals may try and hide produce. They don't want to share but others will be suspicious and insistently demand from them or trick them into revealing what they have hidden in order to take some of it.

This is a sort of egalitarianism. There are no age grades. No, gerundocratic principle. No gender inequality. No recognized leaders. No status positions in some no hierarchy.

By Accra and other pygmy groups implicitly recognize the significance of this political Difference by distinguishing with generic ethnonyms between the forest people such as themselves and Below who are the status obsessed Village People. Well byaker groups recognize their common descent from the first forest dwellers a shared history this sun fables and oral tradition their ritual and singing Styles and they intermarry they do not trade group Goods with each other. They do not trade goods with each other. They simply demand them from one another.

By contrast by other people's relations with the below Village People that predominantly based on reciprocity trade and the exchange of goods.

Below also means uninitiated so byaker provide them with their ritual services.

Rivers divide the territories of different byaker groups, so they do not overlap. However below territories are superimposed on top of byakerland claim on back of forest.

Byaker sea Forest covers homely peaceful and safe and contrast this with clearing such as Villages or large rivers that are hot unpredictable and potentially dangerous and I often asked I was often I asked a couple of times the elders why is it you put up with these below claiming your Forest as their own and they said to us well, in fact they're well the way I would translate this in English then no magic. We are the sedentary people and this of course flies in the face of how Outsiders interpret they call the villagers sedentary and the hunter-gatherers nomadic, but actually what the backers say is look we stay in this area of forest. We we know it intimately we know when the different trees are right for fruits. We know where the animals will go to find their treats and we can make a good living. We always stay in this area of forest. Whereas those Pillow we've watched them they come and then they go and of course the history of migrations of these farming communities through the region is is oh yeah a lot of movement they have moved huge amounts over.

Time and the bioaka watch this and they say look you and we're the ones who stay here with a sedentary people you look at the nomads not us.

You know.

So evangeli consider the status and property obsessed Below in their region to be re-born as gorillas because like gorillas, they fight for status power and authority between themselves and they make aggressive clay efforts to claim parts of the forest as their exclusive property in normal speech below are simply referred to as guerillas because of this Europeans are called Red River Hogs due to their extraordinary accumulation

of wealth in this sense but despite sharing the same Forest as everybody else by using the forest world to incorporate these more recent arrivals implicit evaluations are made about their habits and practices the mirror similar evaluative practices of Outsiders by other civilizations.

Animal labels cost these newcomers as prey and make deceit trickery and the application of hunting techniques in order to get goods from them legitimate.

In so one of my friends is Sakura. We were in a particular Village having a big series of Ceremonies and it was getting really messy because there are a whole bunch of the farmers who catch arriving with new amounts of alcohol to generate debts basically so that they could then get labor on their fields afterwards and it was causing Mayhem and lot of fighting and violence and problems in the community and I said to my friend is sacril I said, why do you put up with this? You know, it's causing so much trouble and he said look when I go elephant hunting. I'll find my elephants. I'm following My Elephants. I'm following my elephant and then suddenly it has a big shift and I pick up that s\*\*\* and I have to smear it on myself. And as I smear it on myself, I become invisible so that when I get really close to that elephant, I can go right up next to him and I'll be able to get my spirit and kill him. Well, it's the same with us with these Farmers we just have to put up with all this s\*\*\* in order to get close enough to get the things we need safely.

um indeed just as the hunter-gatherer goes for the biggest pig in the Sounder or the biggest elephants in the herd. So by AKA Target the wealthiest and most important Outsiders from whom to extract Goods. Thus they readily associate themselves with big men with Chiefs and today with presidents and ministers. So one of the few tarmac roads in southern Congo that went from the capital into the forest went directly from Brazil the capital to a community of Bongo pygmy hunter-gatherers who were very famous for their divination and other mystical skills and the ministers and presidents would go and consult them when they needed a bit of extra help in their decision making Um, so I've been in other work I presented how back by Echo tobu complex called Aquila secures proper sharing within the forest Cosmos.

Through a complex of prohibitions Aquila defines how the body's vital forces reproductive potential moral and personal qualities emotions and Forest produce should be shared. So as to ensure that group members experience good health and problematic child birth and child rearing and abundance of food and a convivial Pleasant atmosphere in the camp.

The embuti and the fa in the aturi forest refer to similar to boozers at Kelly and in linguistics ours and elves slide into one another very easily. So it's essentially the same word.

These taboos take advantage of the extent to which human bodies develop in fundamentally the same way to provide a framework for cultural knowledge to bind on to this system of bottling mnemonics seems designed to provoke curiosity.

It often surprising and sometimes counterintuitive ways a key letter to booze linked together sex menstruation blood hunting food and exchange relations between people

and between them and the rest of the forest Aquila practices lead men and women to use their bodies in very different ways and to cultivate different styles of behavior determining for instance whether as men they stalk silently through the forest or as women, they sing noisilian and walk with big groups with lots of children playing and fooling around about them.

to ward off the dangerous animals No individual or institution is responsible for teaching about Aquila rather the diverse prohibitions exert an anonymous but pervasive pedagogic action prompted by the Natural Curiosity.

They provoke in those subjective subjected to them.

For example, very young children of very interested in food.

They will be curious to see that their mothers don't eat a killer animals, but will prepare them for other people to eat? A brother as he grows up will learn that his menstruating sister is Aquila and while she sleeps in the same Hut as him he cannot go far into the forest for hunting when she menstrates and these things just provoke cure why should that be and is that slow contemplation of why that should be which leads to the acquisition of all sorts of other areas of cultural knowledge.

A newly married couple must stop eating popular and tasty game animals such as blue daika blue Dyker are really easy to catch because you can call them to you. Yeah, they come running out to you. And so you can spear them all or catch them. And so it's a very reliable source of food. It seems counterintuitive that a young married couple who really need as much nutrition as they can get should not eat that the reason is is that when blue dykers are running away from something that they fear they look behind them and they twist their neck back and the idea the the claim is that if you eat the blue Dyker and you're pregnant your baby will look back and of course, that's what we call a breach and can cause severe complications in childbirth. And so the Aquila taboo of not eating blue dykers has a logic which fits in with people's understanding of other areas of knowledge.

So as they mature girls and boys discover aspects of Aquila beliefs pertaining to the cosmology of reproduction and women Secrets or to hunting and men's secrets.

Lord jio emphasized the efficacy of inculcating inequality and hierarchy by suggesting. The difficulture is embodied in such a way in such ways that it is almost beyond the grasp of Consciousness. The hierarchies cannot be questioned.

By passing from practice to practice without becoming explicit discourse habitus remains unchalled Aquila is an example of a similar process inculcating egalitarianism.

Key, meanings and moral sentiments can be durably and effectively transmitted tacitly because they're embedded in inevitable sensory experiences connected with bodily maturation and everyday actions rather than being conveyed by instruction and verbal exaltation.

Aquila's non-linguistic aspects make it difficult to articulate explicitly but also difficult to manage by Authority.

Instead it works by hidden persuasion by provoking curiosity and stimulating each new generation to discover egalitarian ethics for themselves.

As the evangelia hinted on recognizing and booty singing earlier another remarkably resilient non-linguistic way this pygmy civilization transmits itself across space and time. It's through music.

Byaker groups hold up this musical form the ritual performances of spirit plays and Forest skill rather than languages the key indicators for judging the extent to which other people at Forest hunter-gatherers like themselves. This emic focus on ritual performance is indicative of some of the key mechanisms through which this egalitarian civilization Fashions, those who are part of it into a particular cultural style without recourse to hierarchical structures or positions of authority.

Although a minority of these Spirit plays are gender exclusive mode the majority include both women and men participating together.

The basic structure of spirit plays which involves both sexes mirrors the gender division of labor. So reinforcing aquila's underlying principle that the life of Plenty is best achieved by the structured combination of gender differences and gendered production.

In spirit play men call the spirit out of the forest to the secret and janga area and prepare it to dance women entice it out of the secret area and into the human space by their beautiful singing and seductive dancing. So enabling the whole Community to Delight in the joy the spirit brings.

This gendered pattern of interaction resonates with gendered production in other areas such as making children or eating dinner.

According to folk biology a man repeatedly gives semen to his wife for her to tie it up in her womb into a beautiful baby that she then returns to the man for her.

Sorry that she then returns to the man and his clan after birth and they give it a name.

Or how the raw meat that men take from dangerous animals is cooked by women in order for it to be tasty and safely consumed to grow and sustain the camp.

The principle seems to be that men bring things from the outside to the inside women transform The Thing Once Inside by making it beautiful and safe for all the characteristics of this ritual system are shared across a range of pygmy groups speaking different languages and dispersed over Western central Africa and this facilitation International network of certain Spirit play associations right across the region.

The ways that this musical style engages with the new reveal important qualities of such foundational cultural schema that are indicative of why they endure as tools for organizing how people engage with the world.

Michelle kislik who's an ethno musicologist describes how accapy is in the Levi Forest just to the north of where I did my fieldwork used musical performance as a way to explore modernity by adopting missionary songs and other music.

Over time kislink notes. They transformed the new songs such as hymns by elaborating on a theme a musical theme until eventually it's engulfed in a flurry of kaleidoscopic improvisations counter Melodies and elaborations effectively becoming increasingly accurate Style.

This constant embellishment variation and recombination of the melodic modules occurs within their own music too creating huge potential for variation. Each time a song is performed and leading to the creation of new musical repertoires and the extension of existing ones.

Kislick refers to this underlying pattern as a distinctive hacker socio aesthetic that orientates people to engage with new environmental stimuli in a dialogical way.

Importantly for explaining its longevity this musical styles deep structure encourages great variation and create creativity. Every time a song is sung.

In this sense, it manages to be conservative yet endlessly creative and innovative.

Is not a rigid or dogmatic imposition but an aesthetic orientation that drives sound into increasing complexity in a distinctive way key encompassing practices such as Spirit plays provide structural guidelines for incorporating the new and giving it a distinctive byaker socio aesthetic.

Performing Spirit plays structures small-scale communities into large-scale societies from the local to the regional level by ensuring that small camps dispersed throughout the forest come together to form larger Gatherings from time to time in the smallest social unit the camp Spirit plays regularly bring the camp members together once in a while. They draw neighboring camps together for a special event such as to celebrate an elephant kill or to console after a tragedy.

In the dry season commemoration Ceremonies for those recently deceased bring people together in greater numbers than any other events and can attract members of neighboring byaker groups sometimes coming from other countries.

These are Booker ceremonies are the most important social events of the year, which marriages are arranged initiation ceremonies occur a news from the across. The forest is exchanged and old friends meet up again, as do of course old enemies this aggregation and dispersal of people over huge territories is organized and motivated by the social opportunities and the aesthetic Pleasures afforded when performing Spirit plays and Vangelis say that the beauty of spirit plays makes those who witness them go soft.

Since they understand most living beings as having some form of sentience music is very effective in pleasing them just as a people greets and ask each other. Sorry just as people greet and ask each other things for things as a sign of affection sharing sounds with the forest establishes a relationship of communication of care and concern between the human group and the forest since people who care for each other share on demand sharing song with the forest legitimates any demands people make so that the forest can be expected to share its bouncy with people as wild yams as honey wild pigs or elephants.

participating appropriately in a polyphonic song composed of different parts sung by different people's simultaneously is a political psychological and an economic training as well as a musical one.

Anyone can start or stop a song? Though there are particular conventions to follow. There's no hierarchy among the singers no conductor or authority to organize participation each is free to choose which melodic lines they wish to sing.

All must be present and give of their best all the share whatever they have. This is a political education.

Each singer must harmonize with others, but avoid singing the same Melody as they do if too many sing the same Parts the polyphony dissolves. So singers have to hold their own while resisting being in trains Into The Melodies being sung around them.

If you try that when you're singing, it's difficult. This is a psychological education.

Learning to do this one when seeing cultivates a particular sense of personal autonomy one, that's not selfish or self-obsessed. But so the country is keenly aware of what others are doing and seeks to complement this by doing something different.

Musical skills Prime participants to culturally appropriate ways of interacting with others. So the choices that each makes in others in other and other everyday activities do not need explicit justification since their instinctive based on an aesthetic feeling of what is what one ought to do and this is a key aspect of the unspoken grammar of interaction. That is a central Dynamic organizing daily Camp life in a society when no one can apply someone else to do something against their will the musically acquired aesthetic predisposition to sing a different melodic line to your neighbors makes for an efficient hunting and Gathering when it's transformed into an economic aesthetic.

something different from other people If everyone was to go hunting in exactly the same place and there happened to be no animals in that place. Well, the camp is going to suffer hunger. But if you decide to go there and you decide to go there and you decide to go there, well, there's a much better chance that we'll have something to eat.

These are important reasons.

explaining why music and ritual are so preoccupying for by Asha and other hunter-gatherers when they want to know how like themselves and other group of people are The byaker implicitly recognized that performing these rituals and their accompanying musical repertoires has pedagogical political economic social and cosmological ramifications that serve to reproduce key cultural orientations. They consider Central to bayac a personhood and cultural identity.

They do so by seducing Conformity through cultivating aesthetic sensibilities and an appreciation of Harmony driven by our pleasure seeking propensities.

By being largely nonverbal their music can resonate with multiple meanings. This flexibility is crucial to explain how this musical style has endured so long adapting to changing circumstances and new situations by providing guidance, but not Direction continuity despite variation and a means of ordering and making sense of novelty.

Sorry in such a way. You just explained those two pictures there. Which ones the one on the left the one below. Okay. The one on the left is a man doing what's called paracultivation. So when people dig wild yams they don't just abandon the stalks the the stems that the wild yams grow under they plant them back again and what this does is in enhances the abundance of wild yams in their forest. And so you get what are called dense, wild yam patches which are actually crucially important not just for the hunter gatherers, but for Elephants gorillas chimpanzees and various other animals that love to eat these things. And so that's just an example of paraculturation down

up here. We have some boys who are climbing up to do to collect some honey and just behind there. There's another hole in this whole industry. You can see the ladder just there. He's blowing smoking to the whole you can see the smokes coming up here and that's sending the bees away. So he's gonna start sticking his hand in and pulling out the honeycomb and but anyway, so hunting honey collecting and Gathering just, if you want to eat. Well, you need people to go and do those things. But if you can't tell people do it it's much easier through this aesthetic predisposition to just do something different.

um So the combination of constancy and structure and style with creativity and outputs offers a partial account of how this Congo Basin civilization has been so resilient their musical style frames the way people act and think rather than did rather than determining what they do or say and so provides continuity in the context of change music's role in the cultural transmission of enduring aesthetic economic social and political orientations is remarkable. The in Benelli is immediate recognition of and booty as part of their civilization suggests this as do the genetic studies. We looked at earlier revealing that they've been separated for around 44,000 years.

So in conclusion, like presented evidence suggesting a hunter-gatherers civilization encompassing the Congo Basin forest and its dwellers and those on its peripheries the scale of this unconventional civilization is great covering an area twice the size of Western Europe and boasting Traditions whose core features go back over 45,000 years and whose Origins May lie over time scales that any other human civilization can but marble can but Marvel at while location language ecology Technologies and genes have changed musical performance Styles memetical predatory language practices, blood-based prohibitions and a forest hunter-gatherer economy have remained remarkably consistently Associated the material presented suggests that the association of a forest forest hunter-gatherer lifestyle.

With a particularly egalitarian form of political social and economic organization agenda division of labor based on blood and oppositional gendered rituals particular and a distinctive musical style is enduring. It's not what repertoire people are singing But the Polyphonic yodled singing style that they use not which dances they dance or which Spirits they call but the ritual structures they follow when doing so not the language they speak but how it is spoken the perception of what it means to be part of this pygmy civilization is based on an aesthetic quality in which structural style is shared rather than content.

This is not a little tradition despite. The society's composing it living in small-scale groups that are currently marginalized and discriminated against by contemporary modern States. They exhibit aspects of a classic great tradition in the way that they Encompass their members and newcomers evaluate hierarchical practices as immoral barbaric and illegitimate and even imposed their ritual form on the lives and deaths of incoming groups.

Here the cleared domesticated spaces of farmers are peripheral dangerous and unpleasant while the Civilized Center is what we would call the wild forest.

Thank you.

Thank you so much. It's changed here.

It was good. But if somebody can use anybody's got any questions from the room and when he's the big voice and I wasn't oh I think say thank you. I don't know. Okay. Well, can you hear it on Zoom? Can you hear on Zoom the question? Let's hear it again.

or let's get the level of the you want to probably might are you pick? Can you speak again? Is that social ? Can you hear guys? Nope.

Not really. Okay, we'll have to repeat it.

I can hear well now.

They're in with them.

Say instrumentalized them for things.

concerned that What your thoughts are of those two sort of crates? Yeah, that's a very good question the page.

So the question is that within this civilization people are egalitarian in their relations to one another but it appears from what I was saying or the question is to what extent are they actually being hierarchical with these Outsiders? I would have been quick and are indeed. Okay. Yes.

I just hierarchical Twilight I don't want to do my video. I'm just always a thing we've seen.

So, actually they're not hierarchical with the they're evaluation of behaviors is judgmental in the sense that they find these hierarchical behaviors unacceptable and, just yeah unpleasant and, just the way for instance when a person might beat their child. I find that absolutely outrageous or the neglect that some men show towards their their families to their wives and children and all the claims when someone comes along and does as my friend was doing in a way of trapping in trapping the the farmer who came to see the to do tourism when I was in Camp. So but when it actually comes down to sharing food, I was for instance one time in a camp.

We we've been period of quite some that we just hadn't been lucky hunting and there was a commercial Hunter who'd come to the camp and had bullets and a gun and he was lending it out and getting young people to go and shoot.

Animals for him and he had a smoking table where he was smoking this these Antelope carcasses in order to bring them back and sell them in in the logging nearby logging town after some time and we had two or three days where there really wasn't much food and people were getting very hungry and it seemed to me just an outrage that this guy was sitting there with all this meat and he was literally staying up all night to make sure people didn't come and just take bits off it and I'm sure they did but the next sort of a day or so later when we actually we killed an animal and we brought it back into camp and we shed it out with everybody including him. I mean all my the friend who I was with also shared with him. So there's no question that when it comes to the sort of basics of these egalitarian practices that they are not supplied to Outsiders because they come from these barbaric traditions of hierarchy inequality

and hoarding, even though they recognize these as being, To go from their own point of view. They also understand that. Well, that's how these people are and well that's how they are.

But so so their egalitarian in the sense that they will they will give the same way that they are with each other to those Outsiders, but that doesn't mean they haven't got a negative evaluation of the way the The Outsiders are With volume questions. You don't have a point skeptical before the The seminar especially on the gender relations here in how public it is an hour. You could say Society civilization. Yeah.

really exists, but it was very interesting and I kind of just wanted to ask a Including question comment, that is basically the lack of the power relations in an intrinsic way of the society in what kind of permits for traditional Jacker rules to occur without causing inequality in a sense because I still see that there's very like specific role for women specific role for men but that doesn't seem to be an issue among them. Is it because of the lack of Okay, so let me just share your question. So the questioner was asking about it was the skeptical that an egalitarian society could exist and was particularly skeptical in relation to gender and all gender relations. And so the question really was asking to what extents so our gender relations really egalitative. Oh, no the power relations between genders. How are they subsumed within this context of a division of labor? Well, the first thing to say is that the division of labor is not absolute. So, a woman who comes across an animal when she's walking in the forest collecting mushrooms will use whatever means she can to kill the animal in. In fact though. She will avoid blood letting because that's what men do when they hunt animals so she won't pierce the animal she'll use the back of her machete to knock it on the back of the head or she may pick it up and lock it against a tree but she will try and avoid piercing it and causing.

Lot to let which is the male way of blood letting and similarly a man who sees his wife struggling to finish a basket will join her and start doing a bit of basket weaving to help so there's no sort of intrinsic evaluation of these being better or worse and the men can't do things that women do and women can't do things that men. Do in any situation where it seems appropriate people will do what's needed to maximize that situation.

But just to return to your question about power there is power among women and there is power among men but the ritual system which I think more of Finnegan has talked about last time did she to some extent but anyway and so there are you saw that photograph of all the women bound together as one group this isn't Goku. This is the main women's sort of or one of the main women's spirits and when women dance that's and sing those songs, they take over the camp and then we just sort of, we go off they they embarrass us because they insult us particularly elements of sexual performance. That means don't Master properly and it's a form of Education actually there is especially the young men they're educating them about how to, if you want to really please a woman. Well you need to think about this you need to think about that and they do enactments and it's very humorous and are effective so in effect what

they're doing is they're showing their teaching the other women the younger women in particular being taught by the older women wear their power lies how you can bring a man down to size really quickly and the sorts of tools which women have and they explore them in these rituals and then similarly when the men are doing some of their rituals they in one for instance or short they arm over each other's shoulders and they dance up and down the central area of the camp and it's a very loud standing dance and when you've got 20 or 30 men stamping like that the Earth is literally shaking and you feel their strength you feel their power and they're singing These deep Bassy voices and it really does it vote male power in a very powerful way and men and women and children will sort of be in their hearts looking out from the safety of the hearts, but feeling the Earth shake as the men come by and there's a sort of it's a he saw they call it in French is something dangerous and a a bit scary, but but because it's your Scariness, they're the things that are going to protect you from those dangerous animals or from those brutish neighbors who come and try and explore you so it becomes something that's kind of nice because yeah, my my men really are scary. So this in complex ways that they play with the different power of gender, but without it being something which is deterministic of what you do so and cross-dressing for instance is is part of the comedy of certain rituals.

It's part of the way that you explore different ways of enjoying yourself and there's no appropriation. There's certain same sex relationships that will happen. It's not something that's considered abnormal or weird. It's just part of the experimentation and experience of human sexuality. So it's there are very clear containers for these things, but they're not, in the sort of way. We are about always just like that you can only do this. They're much more practical and open-eyed about these things.

We can say more about more than anything.

Well talk about.

Well, yeah and however, but yeah and is there any questions on Zoom here? And you need to unmute so it's oh you had your hand out door door Margarita, and that's make Megan Megan. Oh Megan, sorry.

again, can you unmute Yes, can you hear me now? Yes. Yeah. Oh Jerome.

I just wanted to say that I found your presentation. Absolutely thrilling and I found myself sitting there and Feeling that every single sentence that you uttered could be applied to the son of the Kalahari in my experience. I thought I felt right at home and it was particularly when you were talking about the dancing and singing that I was the possibility of this huge vision of of a larger civilization that you are discussing one that it exceeds 45,000 years in the in the area of the Congo could be could be Thought of in terms of the entire continent of Africa. I was imagining bringing a group of Kalahari Sun people for instance to to singing that was that was like that snippet that you played for us, and I can imagine that within minutes. If not second. The people who would be singing together. They would be embedded in each other's musical Traditions. It would it would happen with lightning speed. I believe anyway,

so I don't have a question at the moment. I just wanted to offer that appreciation. Thank you.

Well, thank you very much Megan that's means a lot to me coming from you. And I think you're absolutely correct that there is something about a greater sort of archaic civilization that is somewhere deep in the in the past and, we we can just see these Trace elements and it is extraordinary that it is music in particular which really does seem to communicate the Deep sense of what that's tradition is and how how old it is. I mean when you think that the San and the pygmys splits around a hundred thousand years ago the fact that these two Traditions are continuing with of course differences and variation up until today really is quite remarkable and it does I mean just put to shame what we've considered to be the great civilizations of our hierarchical world. Yeah. They're just spring chickens compared to this and what's very interesting is To grow who was Alan Lomax Allen Lomax was a very ambitious techno musicologist who created something called the cancer metric database. Thank you. Yes, so he created a system for categorizing musical performances in traditional societies around the world and his sort of main student was Victor grauer and Victor grauer has just in the past 10 years developed a theory where he really does connect these two Styles and suggest that they are part of a very archaic tradition that, we should pay much more attention to so you're feeling is supported by others and particularly by smuy's colleges. There are some French economies who did a study of San and compared it with pygmy polyphonie and they found that the two styles were actually constructed rather differently, but in Sonic appreciation, they sound remarkably similar and yeah from my point of view, it would be hardly be surprising that after such a huge amount of time. There will be some differences in the way that they produced this sound but the fact that they produce such similar sounds really is quite remarkable and I think worthy of a much more detailed work in the future.

But thank you Megan.

Thank you and I'm like Shane do you unmute? Yeah, thank you. I put it in the chat, but what I was interested in asking Jerome about was the commitment of the of the the tribe itself to the continuance of their way of life and Especially when there have been put under pressure from the outside world from Farmers Etc coming with things to sell and interrupting their the dynamic of their lives. So whether you could comment on that and the second point and that is because you said the men go outside and the women are normally inside. I wondered whether women were less prone to those pressures are perhaps more prone more vulnerable in other ways and from in that come from the outside. So those of those questions I asked what to ask. Thank you and was brilliant.

Thank you very much. And those are excellent questions.

So the commitment to the continuity of this way of life, I think people are very committed but there are forces that are larger than them which are now playing out in the forest for instance conservation areas. The best areas of forests are now being carved off and given over to Big International organizations who will exclude people

will kick them out of those areas in order to protect the animals and, rather than blame the sort of way that are Elites societies are consuming resources and damaging the biosphere. They focus on these very small characters and their blame for the loss of Elephants or Rhino not in our case rhinos, but in other places, but they're blaming the small people for problems, which are actually created by much larger systems, which of course we are part of so things like palm oil plantations rubber plant.

Patients logging areas. These are the sorts of big disruptors in the lives of these hunter-gatherers. and for many years. I've been struggling in various ways to help people better represent themselves in these contexts of conflict, but the cards are so heavily weighted against them that it really becomes very difficult for them to resist and because they aren't organized hierarchically resistance is even more difficult because people will tend to rebuke or refuse to follow the agreements or decisions made by one member of their society and that means that they have great difficulty representing themselves to Outsiders. So yes their way of life is under quite serious pressure, but what's very interesting is even in the context of that pressure, they will apply some of the same processes that they apply within their own civilization to these outside forces.

So one of my students Katherine Townsend, she worked with a group of backup who had lived in an Really remote parts of the forest until suddenly. I think it was iron a great stash of iron was discovered underground and initially an Australian company is now a Chinese company decided to exploit the iron and within I think two or three years they had completely cleared an area of about 2,000 hectares and established a small town where all their workers would stay and completely transformed the local area a road now with vehicles traveling regularly bringing supplies and other things to the to the mining town and the backer in her community.

Started to want to try and discover how how could they get there hands on get shares of all this stuff that was suddenly arriving in their forest. And so one of the key ways they would do this is by going to what are called. What's nightclubs? I mean, they're they're basically Shacks where someone has a generator they've wire up a sound system and they get beers and alcohol and sell it to people and then of course, there's lots of dancing and so what she noticed is that particularly the young men who saw that a lot of the newcomers were men and but won't be offered jobs in the mining company because they didn't have the sorts of skills. The mining company was after and would dress up in in baseball caps and they wear bling jewelry fake jewelry and dance the the Rumba Congo rumba style that was going on in the nightclubs and there was sort of somehow by imitating impersonating the the people who were had all this stuff that some They might be able to find ways for themselves to get stuff too. One of the negative consequences particularly for women in this situation. Was that that Macho sort of patriarchy that comes along with with a lot of those musical styles was also something they experimented with so there was much more domestic violence in communities there particularly when people were drunk and some appalling domestic violence actually and levels of drunkenness which became completely dysfunctional. I

mean children neglected for days on end not cared for and so on. I mean really very serious problems fetal alcohol syndrome is now a big issue in the region and so on and so yes these new new phenomena are having a very powerful impact on people another thing which is transforming their way of life is roads, right previously. They controlled people's access to the forest. If you didn't have one of the hunter gatherers to guide you as you walked from one.

To another you just be lost and finding food and all that kind of stuff you'd be really suffering. So the hunter-gatherers could effectively control people and there are a whole set of stories of people who went into the forest with a hunter-gatherer group, but were so horrible to them together. They just abandoned them that one morning they wake up in the middle of the forest and there'd be nobody there and there's a rather. Well, it's it's bit annoying but also quite amusing book by a couple of French explorers who have done their military service decided to go from down the the river Sango in a canoe and survive and they stopped roughly nearby to where I did my fieldwork and actually one of my informants was there was the guy who led them into the forest, but they were so, bossy and entitled and self-righteous. And so after a certain amount of time, he just got fed up he's called dato and he abandoned them and they had this book it's called a congoose.

You can't go up to the And they described how, they had one pistol because they were military guys how they describe how they ended up took them about a month to find their way out of the hospital the forest one of them shot himself in the foot and various other Misadventures anyway, but so that there are ways that they could control people's access to the forest and reserve it for those people they approved of but with roads that's completely lost now. So anybody gets into the forest commercial Hunters gold miners traders of all sorts and that really does mess up their ability to control these spaces. So yes, there are big changes happening not everywhere. It's a big Forest but women in particular are most vulnerable I think to the negative side of this.

Chris yeah people here.

Shout okay. I was interested.

When you said the forest people appropriate words from the farmer.

Seems to me that there's a parallel here. It's not exact parallel, but the parallel between the Sammy in the north of Scandinavia who lived next door to the pins.

I I this this would kind of relationship because the Sammy apparently have a story that in the old days. We were subject to an enemy tribe.

Which then imposed their language upon us and in fact, the family language is is very similar to finish but there's something I'm not pillow ugly and by any manner of greens.

They are indigenous, right? So it's an observation. I presume. Yeah. Yeah. So the the observation about language appropriation was that the Sammy in Finland have speaker language which is of Finnish origin somehow and they have a myth that they their enemies forced them to learn their own their language, but it's clear that they're

not to finish people. So there must be some sort of that was oh, Language adoption or appropriation that has gone on in the past and I've got used to it and people get used to it. Yeah, and certainly with the case of aren't together as here that does seem to be the case people adopt the structures. What's very interesting is so the group I know the the bambangelis speaker particular Bantu structured language. So Bantu languages are characterized for instance by having the singular and plural at the front of the word as opposed to the end of the word as English does whereas a bangian languages they have the plurals and singulars marks at the end. So, really different structure languages, but when you get to the forest and if you walk in the forest with either a member of these groups, you can more or less understand each other because there's about 80% similarity in the forest vocabulary. It's just the structuring and the the village for Cavalry, which is is remarkably different. So there are some very interesting things going on and I think it's because this question Density and language, when you're identity is so obviously different to the people who you're encountering. Well having a few words from their language or a structure from the language is no question of challenging your identity. You're just we're hunter gatherers your Farmers your hierarchical and in egalitative. We're I mean, the differences are just so clear that the whole problem of identity doesn't come into it. You're not searching for these other markers. Yeah. Thank you, Chris.

Can I ask? Yeah, you're talking about pregnancy and the woman giving a child the baby to a man's patrilineal Clan to give it a name to give it a name. Okay, but the issue here is and generally speaking in terms of residence patterns. There's a tendency of female that much localities. It's that same whereas there is also this imposition of Patrick plan.

affiliation How can we? kind of resolve the Paradox that well, I mean, it doesn't really it's not such a paradox in my mind the reason being You you so you get different things from your different parents. And so mother lines give you something it is basically gundu it's a substance, which is your your spiritual Force if you like and some elements of your gundu come from your mother Line and other elements come from your father line, and that's really who you are. You you are associated with the clan which follows the factory line, but that's really for sorting out this business of incest. It's not something which bestows particular how there's no I mean there is always a guardian of the clan who has responsibility for the forest spirits that Clan is Guardian and all but there's no real sense of it's a belonging as opposed to an ownership or a structure of hierarchy. So the the name is just there's a body and then there's a name so the two things make Some enter the community is so and then for the question of matter locality that certainly true in the early stages of a marriage, but once it's established in children are walking it's very common for people to go and hang out with their friends. And, there is an ideal sort of thing always when you're both your mother-in-law's a happy to live together and they're not arguing and Rowing with you or himself and then you're in your camp with your mates and with your other family

members and then that's really the ideal. But of course it's not always like that and mother Angels aren't always easy.

Yeah, that would be similar to that. That's so do hi, there, you need I Hi to hear you. Oh, and to see you very nice to see you. Well, I can't see you, but it's nice to hear you.

thank you very much for this and thank you for making this Vector available for people on Zoom as well. It's really nice.

So my question is about Myakka musical culture.

So they have a very elaborate musical culture, which was noted not just by westerners people in Europe, but also by their neighbors, I understand. Um, they were hired regularly by Bill Outsiders for ritual purposes, right? Yeah.

So my question is I really want to learn more about that. I was wondering for what rituals how frequent was it? Was it only men that were doing these sort of ritual things and I was also wondering because they do have a really elaborate and very dominant musical culture whether there is a kind of specialization going on there which might be partly responsible for the dominance of Music in their culture.

Okay. Well, that's a very interesting question.

So essentially so the neighbors asked them to come and do all the important life cycle rituals. And that really is the key. So circumcision initiation ceremonies, and it's It so this the farmers cultures or societies are based on a system where or Jane Gaia describes it very well, I think as a wealth in people's system. So the the sign of someone being important and having status is not through their material Acquisitions that is as it is in say British Society, but it's through the number of people that depend upon them. And so the more people that depend upon you the more status you have in the eyes of others and these are why they often call these big man Societies in central Africa.

So part of the way that big men demonstrates their numbers of dependence is by not just, the people in their own community that depend on them, but by drawing in huge numbers of pygmies to come and sing and dance at their ritual celebrations and it you can I hear it when I listen to Elder band two men speaking to one another. Yeah about the problems of getting enough pygmies to come to their whatever it is ceremony so that they don't look like they're small men in the eyes of their neighbors and it really is a big issue and their plan very carefully sharing Resources with one another so, all right. Well this I'll give you some manual because I know you'll need it next time you give me some and trying to, really is complex and the Benji will just suddenly stop singing after a couple of hours if they're not satisfied with a thing and the big man is then really struggling. What can I do? What can I do? I've got to get them they've got to keep singing. Otherwise, I'll look like nobody and, we'll pull out all the stops and there's a very skillful manipulation of this competitive hot latching in a sense that the Bantu big men have to do in order to demonstrate that they really are truly big men and it's very interesting that even in those archetypal.

So the god best the qualities that best is famous for really are focused around music and dance around these propensities that the the pygmy is here show the business of controlling the fertility of the neighbors of bestowing the right to blessing curse on them. These are all things that are held within that the image of best and the the qualities of best as a God. It really is extraordinary to me that these symbolic elaborations continue through time remarkably consistently despite the the huge amounts of time that have gone by now. You can't get a really good polyphonic chorus without women particularly interestingly. It's the sort of young women or young girls from the age of about eight to 20 or 18 who really are the motor of ritual performance. Their voices are beautiful. They Inspire everybody else. They have an energy which is just Unstoppable sometimes and that's something that is really celebrated in these communities and it's very often this the sort of children between six and 13 or 14 who are the instigators of ritual performances within the camp. They get together. They start just just having a bit of fun and then it develops into something beautiful and then a few of the other adults around.

Oh, wow. That's really good. I'm going to sit down and join them and then slowly everyone. Come on. Let's have my son.

Oh, it's off and everything goes so when they perform for The Outsiders women and girls are of really key part of the of the chorus and very much involved and the women will make their own separate demands if they feel for instance, the farmer is giving too much alcohol to the men. They'll complain say no. No, we're not singing. You've got to sort us out properly as well and So they're very very important part of the process.

So Chris has a question of previous point about gender. Don't maybe come forward then.

Okay. Yeah, your previously asked about gender relationships.

You're asked about gender relatives. And of course the critics of the idea of public again today.

That's an Last Stand is always I'll be able what about gender shortly because there is no maybe only women you when you said that women can have used but using working with blood. Can you coach say something about another thing? She'd be very important that you just it's incredibly important animal that women actually manage on that. Yeah. It's for women. Yeah, that's easy. Very good.

Yeah, well, sorry that is it really is a very rich Society. So is I do end up missing stuff and thank you for reminding me Chris so hunting, because we're very sort of instrumental in the way. We think about production you think about who was a person who's stuck in the spear as being the hunter but actually from the bengelia perspective.

That's not what's that part's I mean, it's not the easy part but but it's not the most important part. The most important part is actually the relations that you have with the forest and it's the forest giving you those animals. It's not you taking those animals. You have to be smart you're not going to overpower an animal. It's not in the sort of rain with a slow version of Nordic hunting where the animal just stops looks at you and

says, kill me and I know these Congo Basin forest animals you try and kill them. Well, they can give you as tough as you give them and you've got to really be Wiley and smart and not let them overpower you and so the actual Luck of hunting is to persuade the forest to give you those those animals and women are the key instigators of that relationship. They are the ones who charm the forest and this business of going soft. So the beauty of their singing makes the forest go soft and I did mention this business of in exchange relationship. If you are communicating with somebody then that means that you have a potential for asking for Stuff the demanding shares of what they have and this is very much the ideology that underpins women's involvements in in hunting so they will be the ones who sing out and charm the forest by their beautiful singing opening it to the men's hunting activities. And the the key thing which is the elephant hunting is something which is organized by women. So in the sort of very typical I mean obviously Opportunistic elephant hunts like you're walking in the forest and you come across an elephant and if you're an elephant Hunter off you go but but in cases where it's planned is the women who will instigate it and they will plan it and they perform a particular style of song called yearly, which is the it's the it's the the most Elemental of their singing Styles it contains all the basic elements that all the other Spirit plays then elaborate into different directions, but really holds them all as the hearts and during singing women will drink a particular herbal brew and go into these chances and it's very distinctive trance where they sit like this and certain women will fly off above the forest and as they're flying above the forest they look down and where they see animals, they then come down and they tie up the animals with a sort of it's one of these five strings. It's a mystical string and then when they come back out of the trance they have they use Whipping is a particular way of purifying things from bad luck. And so they purify all the all that they purify the can they purify the weapons of bad luck and then they take all the leaves that they've been whipping against themselves and against other things and they dump them on the roof of the elephant Hunter who they want to go elephant hunting and it's a very forceful sort of incitement to go and do this extraordinarily dangerous thing. And because you've got all the women in the camp just saying, right you've got to go and they say, right you'll find your elephant is over there by this particular River or whatever it is. And then the elephant fantastic go and, it really is dangerous to hunt elephants. It's terrifying. I mean, these are huge animals. They're really the skill the knowledge you need to combine together to do it safely is remarkable and so it's actually something, some of my friends they say no. No, I'm not sure much too scary for me and there's no, it's not something SE.

Bad, it's just that's not my the qualities of my character. And so the women by regularly doing this yellow. They enforce the duty of men to go out there and risk your life. Yes, risk your life to get meats and bring it back to us here in Camp and it works.

Sorry, was that the right? Yeah, you never describe that to me in such detail and translate the yellow. I was just gonna further ask about these fiber strings symbolism and the importance because Isn't there something corresponding with the sun with

poisson in terms of threats and rapes and in terms of creation of relationships? I don't know maybe Megan called but is there any sort of parallel and well, I don't know the San material properly.

So maybe Megan can help us here. It's certainly I was not able to hear the question correctly. Could you rephrase it? And so I was I'm struck by Jerome talking about symbolism of the fiber strings particularly when he talked there about yellow and the women using mystical strings to tie down animals and there are accounts from shouldn't quasi I do believe about Strings threads to the sky and Roads linking people and I'm just wondering if there is any kind of linkage any kind of similarity between those.

Well, I think I think they they both participate in what the insurance policy would call Moon things and which are perhaps called. Is it Aquila or Angela? With Baraka tequila. Yeah Aquila that these are mysterious powers that whose rules must be learned and must be learned by by Young People by asking questions.

Well, why is it this way and it is it is a sort of goods to think with for both of them learning learning opportunities and that they they do have similarities in that they are they allow people to perform certain things that are Beyond human capacities such as traveling on the threads to the sky.

But I don't I don't know of a separation that's made between men and women if that's part of your part of your question here for instance.

You seem to have said that the that that the spiritual fibers used by women by the by the byaka groups are Exclusive to women, is that true.

No, it's a general technology, which is used in healing in a whole range of mystical practices from hunting to childbirth to toothache.

You know, that it it's a vast area of knowledge, which I'm rather ignorant of and is quite baffling in many ways to me I is it's one of those areas. I really need to study much more in detail. My wife Ingrid has done much more work on them as she was very interested in the healing system of the bayaka, but they extend far beyond physical illness to cover all sorts of ritual and other purposes to Well, that's also true of Bloom with vision classy both men and women have access to it. And it there there's not such a thing as far as I'm aware of men's Bloom and women's Bloom. It's an undifferentiated sort of substance rather like Aquila as far as I can tell and with lots of mysteries Associated to it.

Yeah, I hope that's a bit of a bit of an answer to her question. Not sure.

Yeah, well, I think these string Technologies really are very interesting is something that we ignore, in Europe, but but there are fascinating area which deserves a lot more attention, I think.

Probably going to have to wind up because we're kind of dreams being and harder work all day and Helen you had a very interesting comment in the chat regarding the relationships of the big men the Bantu big men and they're dependence on the forest hunter-gatherers. And in the Bantu migrations. I thought I was really quite

an interesting comment their potentially and this is Thailand here and I don't know Jerome has any things that yeah.

I mean, I think it is Central to these big men that they have relationships with the first people if they don't they're religious amounts and it really is remarkable right across the Basin still today. Whenever you have an enthronement ritual if they can't if the so want to be Chief cannot get hun together as local hunter gatherers to be present and enthrone him from Wanda Burundi all the way across to the Atlantic coast, they're people their own people will not consider them to be a real Chief a legitimate team. So it is something that's very much ingrained in this this whole region and very Central to the process of movements and migration through it.

Thank you to Jerome, wonderful talk.

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Jerome Lewis  
Egalitarian civilisations (Seminar)  
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