

Decolonizing inclusion

Pan-Africanism and the indigenous pygmy peoples of Africa

Nathanaël Assam Otya'a

Doctor in economic and social history

Ecole normale supérieure de Bertoua, Centre de recherche sur les dynamiques des mondes contemporains (Cerdym), Cameroon

nathanaelassam@yahoo.com

Abstract

How can we think about the indigenous question in the pan-Africanist movement? After some three quarters of a century of more or less sustained efforts to anchor Pan-Africanism in Africa, and at a time when indigenous issues are the subject of debate on the continent, it is appropriate to examine the mechanisms by which Pan-Africanism can be challenged to consider pygmy indigenous peoples* as an African reality to be integrated into its priorities. At the same time, it is important to set out the factors contributing to an agreement on the (non) conjectural destiny of indigenous pygmy peoples in the wake of Pan-Africanism at a pivotal moment when the latter must reinvent itself. Such a need calls for (re)examining the new echoes echoed by indigenous and non-indigenous identities in an Africa traversed by a protean crisis.

Keywords

Identities, pan-Africanism, indigenous peoples, Central Africa, sociohistory

* For some, the term «pygmy» reflects a specific identity - they even speak of «pygmitude» - while others find it difficult to accept the expression. Here, the term is approached in the same way as Cheikh Anta Diop and Léopold Sédar Senghor approached the term «nègre». In their view, the term should be used to challenge Western ideology, while Aimé Césaire prefers to avoid it. Read Bahuchet and Robillard (2012) and Epelboin (2012).

How to cite this paper:

Otya'a, N.A., (2023). Decolonizing inclusion Pan-Africanism and the indigenous pygmy peoples of Africa. *Global Africa*, (3), pp. 189-205. <https://doi.org/10.57832/hx7n-3d13>

Received: October 12, 2022

Accepted: January 09, 2023

Published: September 20, 2023

© 2023 by author(s). This work is openly licensed via [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)



Introduction

Revisiting the history of Pan-Africanism shows that this movement is based in essence, and even in its *raison d'être*, on the aspirations for dignity of the Black African world. Whether we trace its origins back to the 15th century or the early 20th¹, the movement's trajectory is multidirectional and multidimensional, embracing most of the identity, cultural and political echoes of black struggles with a relatively unanimous prestige on the continent and beyond. Yet, despite the multiplicity of sources of oppression that the movement has tackled throughout its evolution, its cultural imprint has scarcely been indexed on the historical conditions devolved to indigenous peoples, who nonetheless lay claim to their intrinsic Africanness.

Militant pan-African discourse emphasizes its capacity and responsibility to assume the diverse aspirations of groups and factions claiming to be African. Thus, although it is called upon by «Creole» or mixed, Central African or diasporic identities, pan-Africanism results from a split within the identity essence and historical and social existence of Africans.

The theoretical data mobilized for a heuristic analysis of Pan-Africanism and its obligations towards «autochthony» in Africa, relate, on the one hand, to the *endogenism* of «micro-African» societies and their millennia-old knowledge, and, on the other, to Kwame Nkrumah's *consciencism*². Indeed, if Pan-Africanism is to reinvent itself through a new dynamic of appropriation on the continent, this cannot be achieved without an inclusive impetus, championing the claims of pygmy peoples at a time when they are conceiving of their national, African and Pan-African citizenship. For the pan-Africanist movement, this means safeguarding Negro-African knowledge, cultures and identities by promoting the indigenous voices of Africa.

Consciencism is understood here as the theory of a pan-Africanist revolution that works towards the autonomy and empowerment of African peoples in general, and Pygmy groups in particular, in a context of decolonization. Indeed, decolonization and pan-Africanism go hand in hand: they both presuppose a movement to free themselves from colonial fetters. Yet, the public policies implemented «for the benefit» of Africa's indigenous peoples in general, and Pygmy communities in particular, reveal a developmentalist dynamic based on internal colonialism³: the representations and practices linked to the development of Central Africa's Pygmies reproduce the same primitivist anthropology that underpinned the white man's «civilizing mission» in Africa and led him to label Africans as «savages» and «barbarians». Today, these same representations lead non-Pygmies to describe Pygmies as «primitive» and «subhuman».

1 Based on a factual historical continuum linking the liberation struggles of the Jamaican and Colombian Diasporas among others, some authors suggest the existence of a proto-Panafricanism, tracing the movement back to the 15th century. See LUP (2013).

2 Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972) was a pro-independence and pan-Africanist statesman from Ghana. These policies are present in various Central African countries, such as Cameroon's Pygmy Development Plan (PDPP). More on this later.

3 These policies are present in various Central African countries, such as Cameroon's Pygmy Development Plan (PDPP). More on this later.

This is why *consciencism* must enter the pan-Africanism/autochthony debate to reorient the «development framework» of the pygmy peoples. Pan-Africanism could thus be enriched with a fundamental dimension in historical terms and in terms of international law, good governance, social justice and democracy in Africa.

Pan-Africanist contributions and «autochthonist» needs for the rise of endogenism

By claiming a «right to take stock» (Liauzu, 2004, p. 27) of all the devices and modalities explored by the African continent in its quest for dignity, Pan-Africanism advocates the defense of multiple rights, including those of a black «race» that refuses to bow to the «givens» of history. Indeed, born at the heart of multiple slavery and colonialist pressures in North America, Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and South America (AU-OIF, 2004, p. 27), Pan-Africanism is tested by the effective political, ideological and cultural mobilization of different Black-African sensibilities in search of identity. To carry out its project of an awakening Africa, this movement refrains from any specialization; its African imprint and origins lead to action structured on the basis of a systematic definition that reflects, on the one hand, the need to exist and, on the other, the need for a strategy to defend African identity⁴. W.E.B Du Bois⁵ writes: «If Negroes are to become a factor in world history, it will be through a pan-Negro movement through an organization of the race, a solidarity of the race, a unity of the race». (AU-OIF, 2004, p. 27).

Marks, legacies and uses of Pan-Africanism

From the outset, Pan-Africanism grasped the urgent need to create conditions conducive to its dissemination, with the intention of maximizing its presence on the continent and in Black African spaces. The aim was to take the Pan-Africanist message to the heart of the imperial stronghold that is Africa. In this instance, the Pan-Africanist effort is being consolidated with a view to changing the course of a history in which Africa and Black people have constantly been the subject of slanderous Western projections. From then on, through congresses, conferences and meetings promoting Black African cultures, the Pan-African movement sought to redefine African history. Thus, the inaugural congress held in London from July 23 to 25, 1900, bore the essence of a Pan-African awakening in search of recognition⁶.

While this first congress laid the foundations for a «conversation» between Africans and Afro-diasporic nationals arising from the history of the slave trade, above all it awakened a Negro-African imaginary, the bearer of a continental vision aware of its cultural potential and the need to develop it. The historiographical productions of Africans illustrate the inspiration that followed and the liveliness of a revolutionary Negro way of thinking. Indeed, all the themes of pan-Africanist historiography appeared: Africa, the cradle of humanity; the anteriority and unity of Negro civilizations; the exemplarity of Ethiopia through its very long history; the brilliance of the political, economic, cultural and scientific life of African

4 This strategy simultaneously integrates intellectual and political dimensions, all directed against «the detractors of the black race». See UA-OIF (2004), p. 30.

5 W.E.B Du Bois (1868-1963) was an American sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, pan-Africanist, columnist and writer.

6 With 1900 as the date and London as the setting, this first congress implied simultaneously exploiting the capital of the greatest colonial power and the entry into the 20th century to inaugurate the first revolutionary action of the Black African group.

states in the Middle Ages; the ravages of the slave trade and slavery; the ability of African societies to survive in the face of the most destructive intrusions; African resistance to slavery and foreign domination; the proximity between Islam and African cultures (AU-OIF, 2004, p. 30).

But apart from the positive resonance of Pan-Africanism with Africans and Afro-descendants, it was in a global forum for «minorities» that it contributed to the growth of identities and cultures that claimed to be African. Indeed, the Pan-African Conference in London was attended by delegations from Haiti, the Caribbean, the United States and South Africa. One of the conclusions of this meeting was, unsurprisingly, the «Appeal to the Nations of the Universe» which states, among other things, that:

The problem of the twentieth century is the question of color, the question of how far ethnic differences, manifested principally in skin color and hair quality, can justify the refusal of more than half of humankind to share fully in the rights and privileges of human civilization. (AU-OIF, 2004, p. 50).

The first Pan-African Congress, held in Paris from February 19 to 22, 1919, reaffirmed the Pan-Africanist movement's perspective on groups of African origin. The ensuing resolutions focus on the five principles by which these peoples now intend to be governed with the strategic orientations that have fallen to them: land, capital, labor, education and the state. Moreover, avant-garde precautions serve as safeguards against any potentially devious drift, abuse or distortion of the new self-image of the black man: «Whenever it is proven that indigenous Africans are not being treated properly within a state, or that any state deliberately excludes its civilized citizens or subjects of black origin from its body politic and culture, it shall be the duty of the League of Nations to bring the matter to the attention of the civilized world.» (UA-OIF, 2004)⁷.

The contribution of the Pan-Africanist movement to the emancipation of black women and, conversely, the contribution of black women to the anchoring of Pan-Africanism in Negro-African spaces should be highlighted. Women's involvement in the struggle for black self-assertion is part of an age-old tradition. Well-known examples such as Queen NjingaMbandi of Angola (17th century), Kimpa Vita of Kongo (17th century), Queen NdeteYalla of Senegal (19th century) and YaaAsantewaa of Ghana (19th century), stand in stark contrast to the idea of women as submissive and dominated. The case of African-American Anna Julia Cooper is worth mentioning. Born under slavery in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1858, she entered a normal school opened by the Protestant Episcopal Church to train black teachers, and went on to pursue advanced studies in mathematics, science, Latin and Greek, disciplines at the time inaccessible to black women. At the age of 66, she defended her doctoral thesis⁸ in France. The only black woman accepted onto the executive committee of the Pan-African Conference in London, Anna Julia Cooper delivered a memorable paper entitled «*The Negro Problem in America*» (UNESCO, 2015, p. 34).

In conclusion, pan-Africanism favors the development of groups or entities whose particular character is considered in the construction of African identity

⁷ In the same vein, the Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World, adopted at the convention held in New York in 1920, proclaimed the full equality of Negroes with the rest of the human community (AU-OIF, 2004, p. 101). Pan-Africanist congresses, associations and festivals were organized between 1921 (Pan-African Congresses, London and Brussels) and 1963 (International Conference of Independent African States, Addis Ababa).

⁸ Thesistitled: *L'attitude de la France sur la question de l'esclavage entre la Révolution de 1789 et 1848*.

and culture. Whether we're talking about indigenous peoples in Africa, Afro-descendants in the United States, Haiti or Latin America, or women, the Pan-Africanist construct, throughout its evolution marked by essentialism, makes its own the particularities that make up the African whole. In this way, it is able to take on board the aspirations of African autochthony and related issues.

Pan-Africanism and Pygmy autochthony: epistemological convergence

Because Pan-Africanism is based on the construction of identity and culture on the African continent, a rapprochement with autochthony is possible, both in terms of an identity «in the making» and in its intranational institutional quality. This being the case, the primary responsibility of Pan-Africanism lies in a community of destinies where the requirements that underpin the essence of every society cannot be flouted without jeopardizing it. This can be established by comparing, on the one hand, a provision of the Charter for the Cultural Renaissance of Africa and, on the other, a reference from Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples⁹. The Charter affirms «that any human community is necessarily governed by rules and principles based on culture, and that culture should be understood as a set of linguistic, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional characteristics of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs» (AU, 2006, p. 5).

The pygmy peoples of Africa have all the characteristics of the «human community» referred to in the charter; those characteristics have been the subject of study for several centuries¹⁰ with the common thread of reprobation of the marginalization and successive tragedies suffered by pygmy identities in pre-post-neocolonial Africa¹¹.

For its part, Convention 169 recalling the historical, socio-political and anthropological characteristics of the groups to which the application of the text is dedicated, specifies that the relevant considerations are attributed «to tribal peoples in independent countries who are distinguished from other sectors of the national community by their social, cultural and economic conditions and who are governed wholly or partly by customs or traditions peculiar to them or by special legislation» (ILO, 1989). Moreover, the evocation of colonization and independence as the breaking points through which the existential determinants structuring African nations lay the foundations of indigenous identity and enable the Convention to apply «to peoples in independent countries who are considered indigenous by virtue of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present State boundaries, and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions» (ILO, 1989).

9 By way of comparison, Article 5 of the Charter includes as one of its guiding principles «respect for national and regional identities in the field of culture and for the cultural rights of minorities». As for Convention 169, Article 5 reinforces the right to cultural difference of indigenous peoples by recalling that: 1) «the social, cultural, religious and spiritual values and practices of these peoples shall be recognized and protected, and due consideration shall be given to the nature of the problems confronting them as a group and as individuals»; and 2) «the integrity of the values, practices and institutions of the said peoples shall be respected».

10 Read Bigombe Logo (1998, p. 256); Vansina (1985, p. 1308); Bahuchet (1993, p. 54); Abega and Bigombe Logo (2006, p. 7).

11 For illustration, see Abega and Bigombe Logo (2006, pp. 79-105).

Finally, the Convention calls for the conservation of the heritage of the peoples concerned. It calls for «special measures [to be] adopted where necessary, to safeguard the persons, institutions, property, labor, culture and environment of the peoples concerned» (ILO, 1989).

On both sides, the choice of protecting particular cultures places Pan-Africanism and autochthony in the perspective of safeguarding «the endangered peoples of the Earth» (National Geographic Society, 1977, p. 5). What's more, such a commitment takes on its full meaning in a context where the adversity of an anthropology of aggression and civilizational subjugation structures relations between groups and peoples located both outside and within the African continent.

The history of African peoples and that of the «micro-africoid natives¹²» shows that living one's identity, and above all having it attested, is a survival challenge. Pan-Africanism is called upon to refresh the continental memory of the frustrations suffered by Africa in the struggle for recognition as a land of identity, culture and civilization weakened by murderous ideologies. In this respect, the intertwining of the Pan-Africanist and Pygmy indigenous movements is determined by a number of convergences at a time when Africa is putting the latter on the path to development. At a time when development is the fantastic paradigm for the autonomous management of African pygmy groups, we need to question the appropriateness of a modernist approach by independent nation-states as «guardians» of indigenous peoples in general, and pygmy groups in particular. Given that the development of indigenous peoples is a case of recycled colonialism, we need to lay the foundations for a pan-Africanist incursion into the reproduction of the primitivist anthropology characteristic of development.

Pan-Africanist consciencism to decolonize the «development» of indigenous pygmies

At a time when development is the hypothetical paradigm for the autonomous management of African pygmy groups, we need to question the appropriateness of a modernist approach by independent nation-states acting as «tutelary» entities for indigenous peoples in general and pygmy groups in particular. Given the way state structures are organized, the development of indigenous peoples has been turned into recycled colonialism¹³, and we need to lay the foundations for a pan-Africanist incursion into the reproduction of the primitivist anthropology characteristic of development.

The developmental coloniality of indigenous pygmy peoples

With a marked passage on the African continent, development¹⁴ has not ceased to be decried; part of the African and Africanist historiographical production does not hesitate to denounce it as an economic, social and cultural option likely to lead

12 Mathias Éric OwonaNguini, préface de Assam Otya'a (2022, p. 15).

13 Read Assam Otya'a (2022) and Péron (1995, pp. 108-153 and more).

14 Gilbert Rist (2013, pp. 40-48) defines development as «a set of practices which, in order to ensure social production, force the widespread transformation and destruction of the natural environment and social relations with a view to increasing the production of goods and services destined, through exchange, for solvent demand». It is important to associate this definition with an ideological dimension that makes development in Africa the reproducer of the entire meta-symbolic charge of colonialism, leading Wullson Mvomo Ela (2015, p. 300) to say that African development is a matter of «colonial humanism».

Practitioners in the field, as well as political and administrative leaders, now recognize the limited results of conventional projects, and a new mindset is gradually emerging, in which the universal idea of integration pilot villages is abandoned in favor of more subtle campaigns. The most enlightened governments such as that of Cameroon, have in fact, undertaken sociological research [...] that would be preliminary to integration projects, their young researchers are questioning the validity of development, and some are drawing parallels between the colonial past inflicted on their fathers, and what the modern state is inflicting on the Pygmies: must Pygmy development necessarily go through the stages that the ex-colonized underwent?¹⁶

Similarly, Bertrand Iguigui and Edmond François Ngagoum (Assam Otya'a, 2022, p. 270-271) note that «on the strength of this truism, we can see that our relations with the Pygmies use the same active grammar to operationalize themselves on a daily basis. In other words, we Bantus repeat the same practices with Pygmies that Westerners used to colonize Africa. The same feelings of superiority, the same duty to civilize yesterday and develop today. In terms of otherness and social imagination, we're in a cycle of (re)production of the same reflexes and practices on the Pygmy [...].

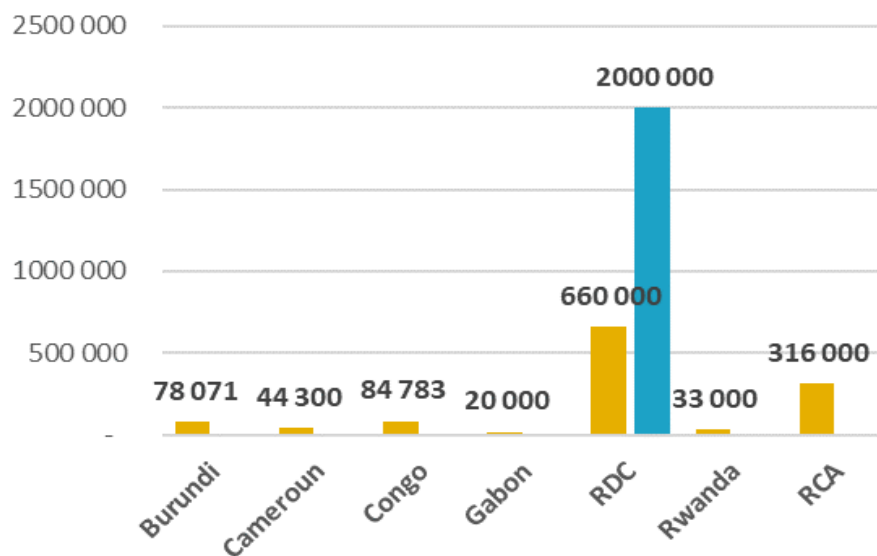


Figure 1: Estimated number of Pygmies in Central Africa in 2013 (source: data compiled from Gitpa 2013 survey, www.gitpa.org).

This concern is not unfounded. In Cameroon, Séverin C. Abega (1998, p. 28) deplores the perpetuation of the colonial education system on the Pygmies and denounces the «Bantouization» of the forest people. Jérôme Lewis (1998, pp. 79-105) condemns the dispossession of the ancestral lands of the Batwa Pygmies of Rwanda. Similar practices are recurrent and continually denounced among the Aka and Bayaka of the Central African Republic - pejoratively called Baminga, a term meaning «sub-human» (DW, 2021). In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), steps have recently been taken to give a less «chosified» status to the country's pygmy groups¹⁷, breaking with practices that, since colonial times,

¹⁶ There may well be a certain irony in Bahuchet's use of the term «enlightened governments». If so, this irony could be put into perspective when we consider that a significant proportion of the populations concerned seem to have embraced development, while others continue to harbor nostalgia for a pygmy existence based on the ancestral model.

¹⁷ One of these measures is the July 15, 2022 law protecting and promoting the rights of indigenous Pygmy peoples. This is the first of its kind in a country with the largest indigenous population in Central Africa, some one million people. <https://www.ledevenir.com/monde/340771/les-pygmees-chasses-de-la-foret>.

have set Mbuti groups in a cycle of violence and war that led to the massacre of forty-six of them in January 2021 (VOA, 2021, consulted 01/01/2023). In Burundi, reports of oppression, discrimination and abandonment of the Batwa Pygmies are frequently made to the authorities (Nicayenzi, 1998, pp. 11-14). Statistical data on the demographics of Central Africa's indigenous peoples are also a source of concern.

This data remains a major problem. In all countries, the random nature of the data undermines the work of both the associations and the public authorities. In Cameroon, for example, figures have not been updated since the 1970s, while in the DRC there is an endless dispute between associations who estimate the Pygmy population at two million, while the government puts the figure at around six hundred thousand¹⁸.

With a view to the «development» of the pygmy peoples, Cameroon has opted for a politico-administrative management tool with a budget that has grown steadily over the years¹⁹. Indeed, the Pygmy Peoples Development Plan (PDPP) came into being at the end of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)²⁰ initiative in 2006. Since then, despite their efforts to resist and maintain their cultural heritage (Bahuchet, 1991, p. 29), Pygmy civilizational attributes have continued to wither away, and the strategic objectives of the PDPP have been systematically applied²¹.

Areas	Objectives
Education	facilitate access to education for pygmy peoples (a tool of alienation and Westernization)
Health	-Reducing infant mortality rates -Set up a community-based system to train pygmy midwives -Train Pygmy community relay agents whose role would be to mobilize Pygmies to attend health facilities. - Financing essential medicines
Citizenship	-Ensure that Pygmies are represented everywhere -Ensure that pygmy children have national identity cards and birth certificates.
Agriculture and management of non-timber forest products	- Enhance agricultural practices - Add value to non-timber forest products
Inter-community dialogue and land tenure security	Promotion of inter-community dialogue and land tenure security

Table 1: PDPP priority areas and objectives (source: Assam Otya'a, 2022, p. 166).

18 <https://www.ledevoir.com/monde/340771/les-pygmees-chasses-de-la-foret>

19 Despite this budgetary opportunity, implementation of the PDPP continues to encounter difficulties in the field. Indeed, resistance remains from pygmy communities who do not hesitate to voice their disapproval of the «civilization offers» arising from the development vision. Read Abe (2010, pp. 219-240).

20 This is where pan-Africanism must be challenged with equal vigour, for how can sovereign nations that talk of «development» compete to join the HIPC which halo their failure through a horrified statement of their poverty, indebtedness and failure to pursue development, then seek to impose this idea on a pygmy civilization whose millennia-old, self-sufficient know-how has been tried and tested and attested by scientific history? Pan-Africanism must enable the African «national» conscience to create its own perspectives, well beyond such shameful considerations as the «HIPC initiative». The quest for and the advent of economic sovereignty, stemming from the union of peoples and (all) knowledge stemming from the continent's active identities, are the credos of this pan-Africanist renewal.

21 While Central African states are bound by development project financing conditions clearly formulated by donors through the Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) imposed on borrowing states by the World Bank since 2018, Cameroon and the DRC have demonstrated a willingness to supervise pygmy peoples dating back to the post-independence era. Every decade, Cameroon implements development projects: « Mille pieds » (1966); « Villages pilotes » (1980-2000); « Forêts et développement » (2000-2006). Since then, the countries concerned have had to guarantee environmental security by protecting their populations and consider the negative impacts of these projects.

Analyzed in the context of colonial relations, the PDPP aims to be comprehensive in its approach to solving the problems of pygmy communities. For example, it aims to facilitate access to formal education²² for Pygmy peoples. With regard to health, the overall aim is to interest Pygmies in modern health practices. Although citizenship tends to be dedicated solely to the Baka, this component includes support for all Pygmies towards a national and republican consciousness²³. The agricultural sector, for its part, advocates the participatory aspect of the benefits that Pygmy peoples derive from forestry. Inter-group cohabitation is at the heart of the project, with careful attention paid to relations between communities, as well as access to land for Pygmy peoples.

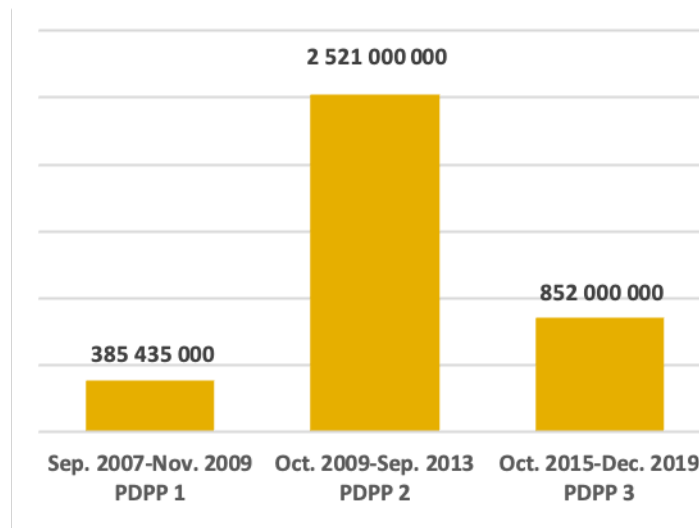


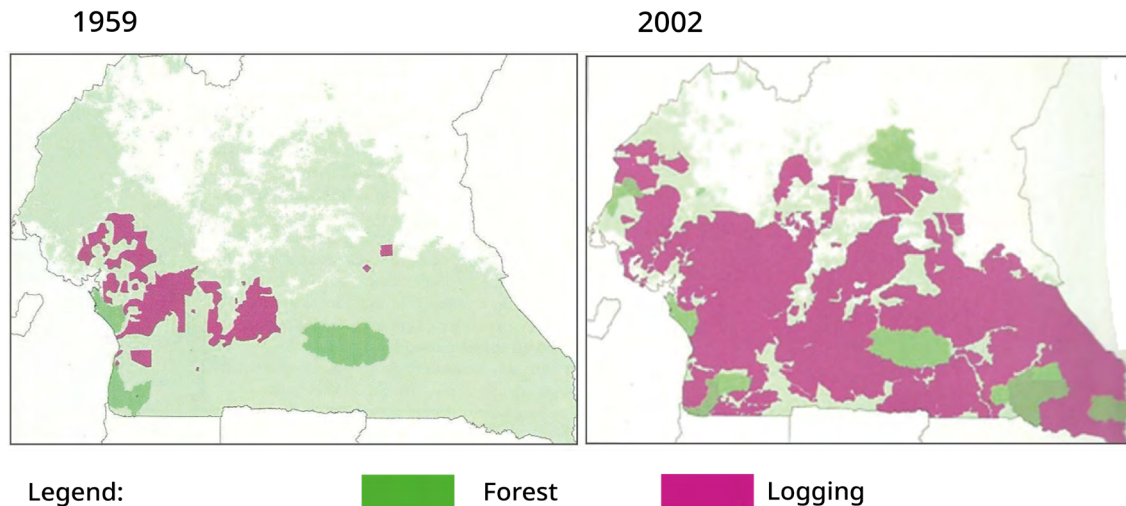
Figure 2: PDPP budget consumed from September 2007 to December 2019 (source: Assam Otya'a, 2022, p. 170.).

The PDPP covers pygmy communes in the South, Centre and East regions. Phase 1 (2007-2009) covers only the South region with a budget of 385,435,000 FCFA (US\$700,790). With an investment allocation of 237,850,000 FCFA (US\$432,454), PDPP 1 reflects the urgent need to organize the structures on which the plan will be based. In addition to the Southern region, PDPP 2 (2009-2013) includes the Central and Eastern regions, with a budget of 2,521,000,000 FCFA (US\$4,583,636). It provides grants for training in middle and high schools, as well as the creation of vocational training courses whose objective is reminiscent of the colonial discourse: “To bring out a pygmy elite” (PNDP, 2009) for which the program has a budget of 130,000,000 FCFA (US\$236,363); PDPP 2 also includes training in small trades, and allocates 30,000,000 FCFA (US\$54,545) for this purpose (PNDP, 2009, p. 34). PDPP phase 3 (2018-2021) has an initial budget of 852,000,000 FCFA (US\$1,549,090), with a focus on capacity building with 299,300,000 FCFA (US\$54,4181).

The tragedy caused by state action is tightening the grip on the civilizational extinction of indigenous Pygmy groups. The forest ecosystem has been under government control since colonial times (Bigombe Logo & Dabire Atamana, 2002, p. 9). In this context, logging operations are carried out continuously, driving pygmy groups out of the forest on which their traditional system is based.

²² This is the model promoted by the national public education system. It is to be distinguished from the non-formal model which is led in part by non-governmental organizations such as Plan Cameroon in the schooling of pygmy peoples.

²³ Citizenship seems to occupy a central place in the strategic axes of the PDPP. See PNDP (2018, consulted 07/05/2020).



Map2: Evolution of logging in Cameroon from 1959 to 2002 (source: Vande Weghe, 2002, pp. 322-323).

Map 2 shows that the area logged rose from 1.79 million hectares in 1959 to 17.3 million in 2002. The pattern of logging operations assigns African governments the role of “subcontractors”, among a plethora of multinationals. What’s more, the destination of resources and political decisions are made solely by those governments, even though the products are destined for the West or China: a continuation of the colonial system of yesteryear and a challenge for the pan-Africanist movement, which has been called upon to adopt a regional approach to logging.

With almost 450,000 square kilometers of forest currently under concession, industrial logging is practiced to varying degrees in the six countries of the Congo Basin. Figure 3 shows that Gabon and Cameroon are the biggest producers of round wood while the DRC, which has the lowest production activity behind the Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea, accounts for over 60% of the total forest area in the Congo Basin (Megavand et al., 2013, p. 42).

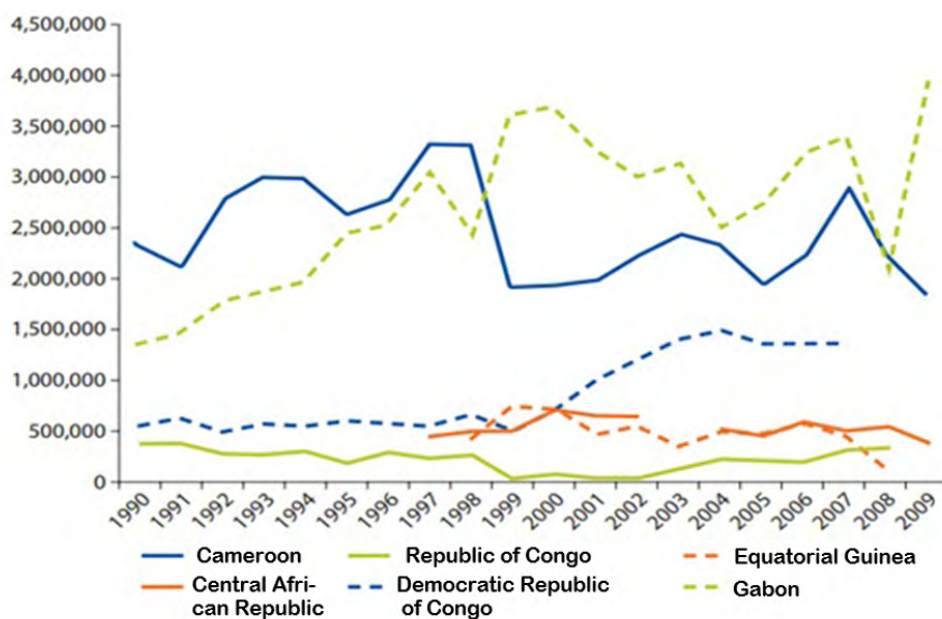
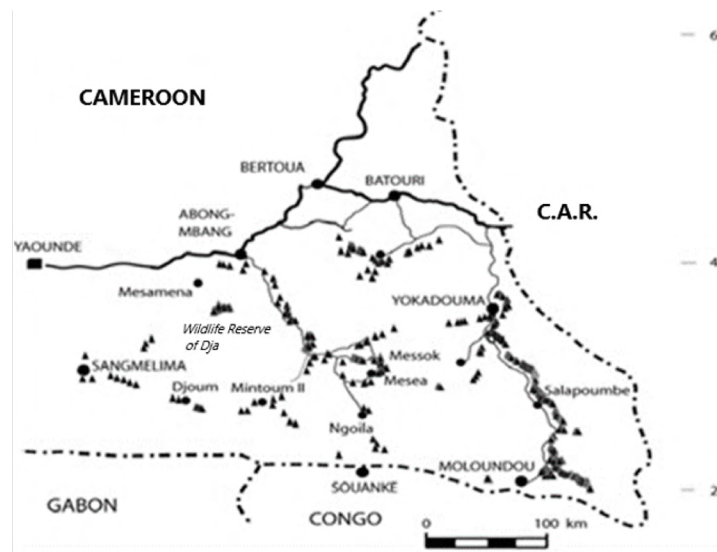


Figure 3: Annual round wood production (cubic meters) in Congo Basin countries from 1990 to 2009 (source: Megavand et al., 2013, p. 42).

In Cameroon, this phenomenon is forcing the sedentarization of pygmy groups. They now litter the dusty roads of the countryside, following the example of the Baka, as shown in Map 3 below:



Legend:  Pygmy Villages — · National borders — Regional boundaries

Map 3: Location of roadside Baka in southeast Cameroon (source: Leclerc, 2012, p. 47).

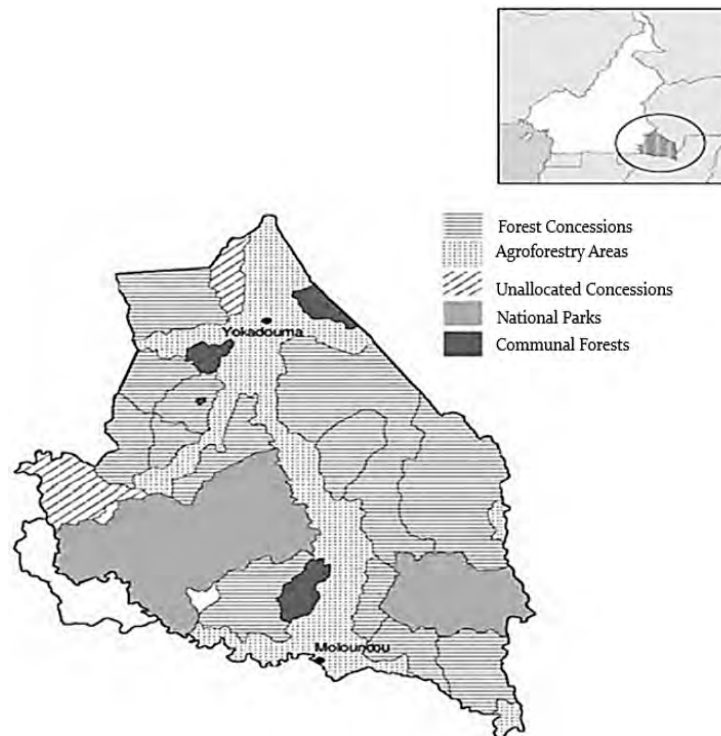
The sedentarization of Pygmies in Cameroon began in 1966. Inherent to logging, the idea of settling the Pygmies was part of the “offer” to optimize a “developed” lifestyle model. Sedentarization is therefore a component of the PDPP. It exposes the groups to a spatial rupture that ignores international law, which emphasizes the need to protect indigenous peoples and their ancestral knowledge (ILO, 1989). Map 3 shows the sedentarization of the Baka in south-east Cameroon. Several dozen villages, built on the Bantu model, are now inhabited by the Baka. This critical situation is at the root of a host of mutations ranging from galloping demographics to health crises (Ndzana, 2020, p. 363), not to mention the anarchic recomposition of populations. All this is leading to a slow but inexorable destruction of the Pygmy heritage.

In Cameroon, the malaise of pygmy groups is accentuated by disadvantageous forest sharing (map 3) and by (forced) migratory movements whose point of fall is the roadside with the miserable living conditions that ensue (map 4).

It is only in communal forests that local populations are allowed to carry out specific agricultural activities. In an environment where almost all wildlife is protected, Pygmies are reduced to expediency²⁴. The intervention of pan-Africanism in the equitable management of forest ecosystems is therefore to be hoped for, all the more so as pygmy groups maintain a strong bond with their natural habitat.

The Pygmies’ efforts to adapt to development are part and parcel of a resilience that emerges from the maintenance of the hut in the indigenous social environment. As a fundamental part of the heritage of forest civilization, the fate of the hut - and

24 France 24 YouTube report «Cameroon: la mort à petit feu des Pygmées Baka» (Cameroon: the slow death of the Baka Pygmies). (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjcqm03Mm-4&ab_channel=France24). See also Global Forest Watch (2005, p. 21).



Map 4: Distribution of allocated land in South-East Cameroon
(source: Pyhälä, 2012, p. 11).

with it all the wealth of Pygmy heritage - calls for urgent pan-African intervention. The determination of pygmy groups to save the hut allows us to reappraise the debate on colonization and its legacies. Among them, the struggle for recognition of indigenous identity, the right to difference and humanity, and the safeguarding of the forest are a pale outline. Thus, for pan-Africanism, these habitats reflect an architectural duality in which tradition and modernity coexist; through this device, integration hardly means the elimination of a highly secular identity heritage (Assam Otya'a, 2021, p. 204).

The living conditions of indigenous groups are on the agenda of numerous debates organized by defenders of the rights of these groups, following the example of the international colloquium in Kinshasa in November 2021, or the major national dialogue on citizenship and political participation of Pygmy peoples held in Yaoundé in December 2018. What emerges is that the relationship between indigenous peoples and African nation-states functions according to an internal colonialism²⁵.

The pan-Africanist incursion into pygmy “development”: putting an end to indigenous agony

Pan-Africanism's involvement in the appropriation of indigenous development requires, on the one hand, a reexamination of the place colonial pain occupies in African consciousness and, on the other, a repositioning of colonialism in the texts.

Since its official birth in 1900, Pan-Africanism has worked to regulate the balance of an African consciousness bruised by long centuries of Western slander, intervening ideologically and politically to refute the famous theses of Africa's “ahistoricity” and to find endogenous solutions to the economic awakening of African peoples

²⁵ On internal colonialism, see González Casanova (1964, pp. 291-292).

and states. In this way, his engagement with global historical consciousness in general, and African historical consciousness in particular, probes the equation of indigenous citizenship in an Africa that is trying to shake off colonial domination.



Photo 1: Nathanaël Assam Otya'a and Pygmies in front of a hut in Ndjibot (East Cameroon) in November 2005 (source: Assam Otya'a, 2022, p. 206).

Under the pretext of development, internal colonialism presents, along with classical colonialism, difficulties that determine their ancestral link (Assam Otya'a, 2022, p. 22). Indeed, colonized societies are built on an axiological conception of society. Yesterday as today, the social divide born of internal colonialism presents structural inequalities that are total and destined to last (Assam Otya'a, 2022, p. 23).

First of all, the social structure in such a context shows two antagonistic poles: on the one hand, the “feudal center” and the suburban periphery, and on the other, the “North” and the “South”. The conception of society here is highly dependent on the colonial history from which the country derives its ancestry; consequently, this society has a dualistic character (Assam Otya'a, 2022). González Casanova (1964, p. 293) describes its contours:

Dualist societies are the result of contact between two civilizations, one of which is technically more advanced than the other; but this society is also the result of colonial development, of relations between “evolved Europeans” and “archaic natives”. The colonial structure is closely linked to development in inequality - technical, institutional, cultural - and to forms of combined exploitation, simultaneous and not successive as occurs in the classical model of development.

Secondly, the inequalities born of classical and internal colonialism are based on the globalization of the precariousness of the “archaic” group, confining it to a fundamental backwardness with regard to human dignity. As things stand, just as Africa lags behind the West in all areas of conventional activity, so do Pygmies lag behind non-Pygmies (Assam Otya'a, 2022, p. 24).

Finally, any analysis aimed at understanding the causes of the “backwardness” of dominated peoples, or any initiative to reduce their precariousness comes up against political and socio-cultural blockages.

In this context, how can Africans in general, and indigenous Pygmy peoples in particular, (still) believe in the Pan-Africanist ideal? The new memory of Pan-Africanism must therefore be built around its initial struggle to enhance the status of indigenous peoples and the newly determined struggle for their citizenship.

If, as Nkrumah (1964, p. 98) writes, the aim of consciencism is “to restore to Africa its humanist and egalitarian social principles” in order to “reconstitute the egalitarian society”, the pan-Africanist movement must now work to eradicate, or undermine, internal colonialism among indigenous Pygmy peoples in an Africa struggling to learn the lessons of its colonial memory²⁶.

Seen from the inside, the pan-Africanist movement and its implications for African memory are helping to remove the indigenous right to be different from political and identity-based considerations, and the tragedy induced by the disintegration of a thousand-year-old civilization²⁷. He thus calls for a new sense of responsibility on the part of the dominant forces claiming to be part of the Pan-Africanist movement in order to reaffirm, in a new direction, Africa’s values of equality.

African states are called upon to inscribe colonialism in a new historicity that breaks radically with the historiographical trends that have dominated the literature until now, overcoming the vision of colonization as an abomination²⁸. This new literature of colonization proves that Africa assumes its responsibility for perpetuating its colonial history (Stengers, 2004, pp. 51-53). Thus, for formerly colonized peoples, colonizing the pygmy peoples means legitimizing European imperialism in Africa in order to inscribe themselves in historical continuity (Assam Otya’a, 2021).

For the pan-Africanist movement, this constraint proves prohibitive. Indeed, it’s one thing to note the excesses of an African society whose unstructured memory seems to be marked by oblivion of the painful conditions and cultural wanderings violently divulged in the popular representation of the peoples of Africa. But it’s quite another to invalidate everything that has so far been said, written and thought about colonization in Africa. In particular, it is non-negotiable for Pan-Africanism to relativize the criminal nature of colonialism.

Consequently, the elaboration of a tolerance threshold for the “development” of indigenous peoples must consider patrimonialization, the only respectful option, and not development radically inscribed in contempt for peoples (Verschave & Hauser, 2004, p. 7).

Conclusion

Pan-Africanism is at a decisive turning point in its history. In addition to traditional struggles, it must now normalize relations between Africa’s indigenous peoples and the nation-states that house them. Between the classical colonialism of yesterday and the internal colonialism of today, the pan-Africanist movement is more than ever needed. The cultural and identity-related problems of indigenous peoples

26 On the subject of memory games in a post-colonial African context, read Stora (2006, pp. 42-47).

27 For an account of the faces of a society subjected to the colonial situation, see Balandier (1911, p. 5).

28 Aimé Césaire (1955) is at the forefront of the authors who infuse this idea.

call into question the precariousness engendered by the unequal, assimilationist and colonizing development of pygmy civilizations. Alongside the official versions extolled by the drive for all-out development, fundamental questions are being raised both outside and within the African continent, indicating that the whole history of African development needs to be reconsidered, both for yesterday's colonized and today's colonizers (Rist, 2013, pp. 369-391) and for indigenous pygmy peoples now constituted as a cultural identity agonizing over development (Latouche, 1991, pp. 175-220). In this respect, Pan-Africanism needs to draw on endogenist and conscientist ideologies. These ideologies should make it possible to decolonize development in order to save Africa from a colonialism that it never ceases to condemn.

Bibliography

- Abe, C. (2010). L'offre scolaire à l'épreuve de l'attachement culturel chez les Pygmées. Dans Pallante, G. (dir.), *Enseignement et culture*. Presses de l'Université catholique d'Afrique centrale (Pucac).
- Abega, S. C. (1998). *Pygmées Baka. Le droit à la différence*. Inades-Formation.
- Abega, S. C., Bigombe Logo, P. (2006). *La marginalisation des Pygmées d'Afrique centrale*. Afrédit.
- Assam Otya'a, N. (2021). *Les disparités bantou/pygmées au Cameroun : analyse des déterminants historiques et socioculturels*. [Thèse de doctorat, Université de Douala].
- Assam Otya'a, N. (2022). *Les Pygmées du Cameroun dans l'État-nation : chroniques d'une colonisation*. Dinimber&Larimber.
- Bahuchet, S. (1991). Les Pygmées d'aujourd'hui en Afrique centrale. *Journal des africanistes*, 61(1).
- Bahuchet, S. (1993). *Histoire d'une civilisation forestière*. Peeters SELAF.
- Bahuchet, S., Robillard, M. (2012). Les Pygmées et les autres : terminologie, catégorisation et politique. *Journal des africanistes*, 82-1/2. <https://doi.org/10.4000/africanistes.4253>
- Balandier, G. (1911). La situation coloniale : approche théorique. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*.
- Bigombe Logo, P. (1998). Cameroun : Pygmées, État et développement. L'incontournable ajustement à la modernité. *L'Afrique politique. Femmes d'Afrique*, Karthala.
- Bigombe Logo, P., Dabire Atamana, B. (dir.) (2002). *Gérer autrement les conflits forestiers au Cameroun*. Presses de l'Université catholique d'Afrique centrale
- Césaire, A. (1955). *Discours sur le colonialisme*. Présence Africaine.
- DW (2021). *En RCA, les Pygmées défendent leurs droits*. Consulté le 01/01/2023 sur <https://www.dw.com/fr/en-rca-les-pygmees-defendent-leurs-droits/a-58770259>
- Epelboin, A. (2012). Fierté pygmée et « pygmitude » : racisme et discriminations positives. *Journal des africanistes*, 82-1/2. <https://doi.org/10.4000/africanistes.4280>
- Etounga-Manguéle, D. (2015a). L'aventure du développement n'est pas unidimensionnelle. Dans Pondi, J.-E. (dir.), *Repenser le développement à partir de l'Afrique*. Afrédit.
- Etounga-Manguéle, D. (2015b). *Peut-on guérir d'une crise de civilisation ? Propos sur la pathologie du sous-développement*. Éditions CLE.
- Global Forest Watch (2005). *Aperçu de la situation de l'exploitation forestière au Cameroun*. Rapport de l'Observatoire mondial des forêts Cameroun.
- González Casanova, P. (1964). Société plurielle, colonialisme interne et développement. *Tiers-Monde*.
- Kabou, A. (1991). *Et si l'Afrique refusait le développement ?* L'Harmattan.
- Latouche, S. (1991). *La planète des naufragés. Essai sur l'après-développement*. La Découverte.
- Leclerc, C. (2012). *L'adoption de l'agriculture chez les Pygmées Baka du Cameroun*. Éditions Quae.
- Lewis, J. (1998). Les Pygmées Batwa : un peuple ignoré au Rwanda. Dans Abega, S. C., Bigombe Logo, P., *La marginalisation des Pygmées d'Afrique Centrale*. Inades-Formation.
- Liauzu, C. (2004). *Colonisation : droit d'inventaire*. Armand Colin, p. 27.
- Megavand, C., Mosnier, A., Hourticq, J., Sanders, K., Doetinchem, N., Streck, C. (2013). *Dynamiques de déforestation dans le bassin du Congo*. Banque mondiale.
- Mvomo Ela, W. (2015). Le concept de « mise en valeur » dans la politique de développement colonial de la France. Dans Pondi, J.-E. (dir.), *Repenser le développement à partir de l'Afrique*. Afrédit.

- National Geographic Society (1977). *Peuples menacés de la Terre*. Flammarion.
- Ndzana, I. B. (2020). Entre le recul de la forêt et la difficile sédentarisation : un défi d'exister des Baka de la localité de Djoum au Sud Cameroun. Dans Pare, D., Zouyane, G. (dir.), *L'identité en question. De la quête de soi à la rencontre de l'autre*. Dinimber&Larimber.
- Nicayenzi, L. (1998). Les Batwa et le développement au Burundi. Dans Abega, S. C., Bigombe Logo, P., *La marginalisation des Pygmées d'Afrique Centrale*. Inades-Formation.
- Nkrumah, K. (1964). *Le consciencisme*. Payot.
- OIT (1989, 7 juin). *Convention relative aux peuples indigènes et tribaux*. Convention n° 169, Genève, préambule. <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/indigenous-and-tribal-peoples-convention-1989-no-169>
- Péron, X. (1995). *L'occidentalisation des Maasai du Kenya*. L'Harmattan.
- PNDP (2009, janvier). *Plan de développement des peuples pygmées. Document de stratégie de mise en œuvre et plans d'actions*. p. 27. janvier 2009. https://www.pndp.org/documents/P144637-PLAN_ACTION_PDPP_PNDP_3.pdf
- PNDP (2018, 20 août). *PDPP III : un guide pour une meilleure éducation à la citoyenneté*. <https://www.pndp.org/detail-actualite.php?idactualite=292>
- Pondi, J.-E. (2015). Repenser le développement à partir des spécificités africaines. Dans Pondi, J.-E. (dir.), *Repenser le développement à partir de l'Afrique*. Afrédit.
- Pyhälä, A. (2012). *Quel avenir pour les Baka ? Droits et moyens de subsistance des peuples autochtones dans le Sud-Est Cameroun*. IWGIA.
- Rist, G. (2013). *Le développement. Histoire d'une croyance occidentale*. Les Presses de Sciences Po.
- Stengers, J. (2004). Les fonctions de l'histoire dans la société. *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 82(1-2).
- Stora, B. (2006). Quand une mémoire (de guerre) peut en cacher une autre (coloniale). Dans Blanchard, P., Bancel, N., Lemaire, S., *La fracture coloniale*. La Découverte.
- Unesco (2015). *Femmes africaines, panafricanisme et renaissance africaine*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235231>
- UA-OIF (2004). *Le mouvement panafricaniste au vingtième siècle*. ENA, Panafrika, Silex, Nouvelles du Sud.
- UA (2006). *Charte de la renaissance culturelle africaine*. Préambule. https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/32901-file-02_charter-african_cultural_renaissance_fr.pdf
- Vande Weghe, J. P. (2002). *Forêts d'Afrique centrale. La nature et l'Homme*. Lannoo.
- Vansina, J. (1985). L'homme, les forêts et le passé en Afrique. *Annales. Économies, sociétés, civilisations*.
- Verschave, F.-X., Hauser, P. (2004). *Au mépris des peuples. Le néocolonialisme franco-africain*. La fabrique éditions.
- VOA (2021, 20 janvier). *Les Pygmées congolais demandent une enquête après un massacre*. www.voafrique.com-les-pygmées-congolais-demandent-une-enquête-après-un-massacre