

**SURROGATE SURFACES:
A CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETIVE APPROACH TO THE ROCK ART
OF UGANDA**

by

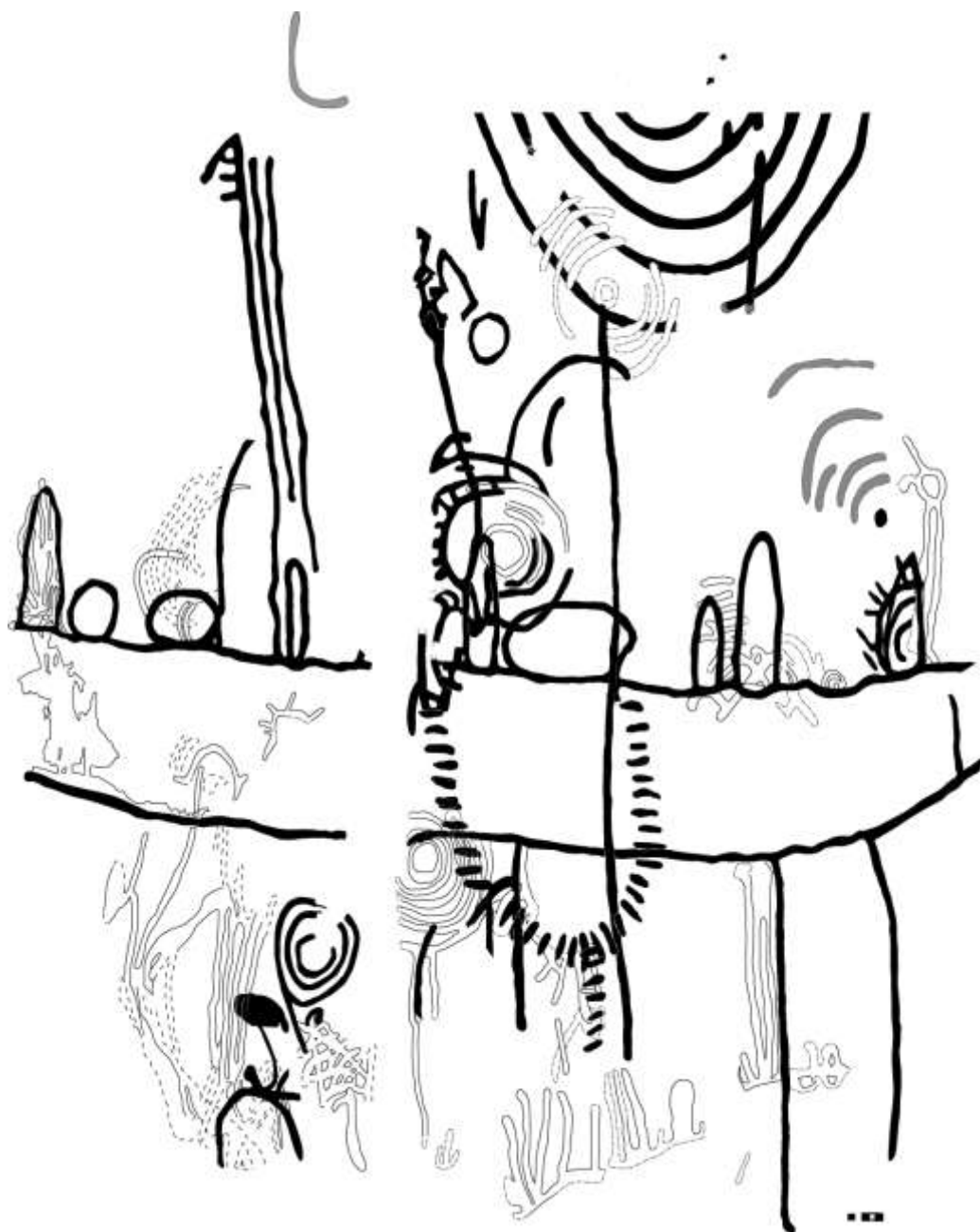
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Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Signed:.....

Catherine Namono

5th March 2010

Dedication

To the memory of my beloved mother, Joyce Lucy Epaku Wambwa
To my beloved father and friend, Engineer Martin Wangutusi Wambwa
To my twin, Phillip Mukhwana Wambwa
and
Dear sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews

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Glossary of terms

<i>akami</i>	noise or conflict
<i>apa</i>	camp
<i>bopi</i>	playground
<i>ekimi</i>	quietness or peace
<i>endu</i>	family leaf hut
<i>keti</i>	disembodied spirits, are both human and animal and not necessarily spirits of the dead
<i>kuma</i>	vagina
<i>kumamolimo</i>	the hearth of the <i>molimo</i>
<i>ndu</i>	womb
<i>ndura</i>	forest
<i>pepo</i>	life-force

Terminology

In this thesis, I use the term 'Pygmy' to describe hunter-gatherers of the Central African rain forest to distinguish them from the savannah hunter-gatherer groups of southern Africa. I reject all pejorative connotations of the word 'Pygmy'. I use the terms hunter-gatherer, farmer or pastoralist to define groups of people according to their life-ways. In southern Africa, hunter-gatherer groups are generally termed either Bushmen or San people. Some researchers today consider the term 'Bushman' pejorative although some of the Bushman people prefer using it to alternative names such as 'San'. San is a Nama word for 'vagabond' or 'cattle-less wanderer'. 'San' is therefore also potentially pejorative. There is no single emic word for all the Bushman groups, each have their own name (Lewis-Williams 2003: 123). Therefore, the terms 'Pygmy', 'San' and 'Bushman' I choose **do not** carry any pejorative and derogatory connotations in this thesis.

Abstract

Rock art in Uganda is under-researched, and where research has been done the rock art was erroneously attributed to ‘Bushman-like’ people. This misattribution resulted in flawed interpretations. Uganda forms part of the geometric art zone that spreads across central Africa, including Angola, northern Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Using a contextual interpretive approach, this thesis considers the meaning of the geometric rock art of Uganda.

Arising from recording and analysis of geometric rock art sites in Uganda, a literature review and archival searches on oral traditions and interviews with heritage holders, the study attempts to sequence the art and tie identified patterns in the rock art to data from ethnography, oral tradition and archaeological sources. In this thesis, I consider the geometric rock art in Uganda to be made within a context of ritual.

This study makes an empirical contribution by generating a comprehensive database of rock art in Uganda. Methodologically, this is the first time that a contextual approach is used to identify patterns and to interpret the rock art in Uganda. Interpretatively, this study generates new knowledge about the geometric rock art as well as information on related living heritage.

Introduction

This thesis ends a 41-year hiatus of rock art research in Uganda and, in doing so, is a contribution to the growing body of social and contextual analytical studies relating to the rock art of Africa. Significantly, this study offers something theoretical and social to the lacuna of rock art research in Uganda and East Africa.

In 2003, I began my academic conversion from art history to archaeology. At the heart of this conversion was the desire to study the rock art of Uganda. The challenges of this conversion did not permit a survey of rock art in Uganda. However, I was fortunate to conduct a research project on the rock art of Bantu language-speaking farmers in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The rock art of these farmers, the Northern Sotho, comprise animal and geometric forms. Emerging from this background, I was equipped to discern motifs of Bantu-speakers from the geometric motifs I would encounter in Uganda. My conversion complete, in 2006, I was able to conduct fieldwork on the rock art of Uganda around which this thesis revolves.

In this study, Chapter 1 situates the rock art of Uganda within a broad environmental and cultural framework. This chapter situates the thesis in relation to current archaeological understandings and to contemporary Pygmy debates. It explores two notions of Pygmy existence, and considers how these notions have influenced anthropology and archaeology. The chapter concludes with a demonstration that the Pygmies may have made the rock art of Uganda.

The second and third chapters focus on the fieldwork in 2006 that provided the data for this thesis. Chapter 2 traces past rock art studies in Uganda and shows the trends in research over the past 41 years. Figure 1 shows the area of study. Included are those areas surveyed for rock art and areas not surveyed due to

logistical reasons. These chapters provide a comparative analysis with other parts of the region and follow-up the in-depth survey of Chaplin (1974), (conducted in 1966, but published 8 years later), as well as studies of rock art in Central Africa by Clark (1958) and more recently Smith (1995).

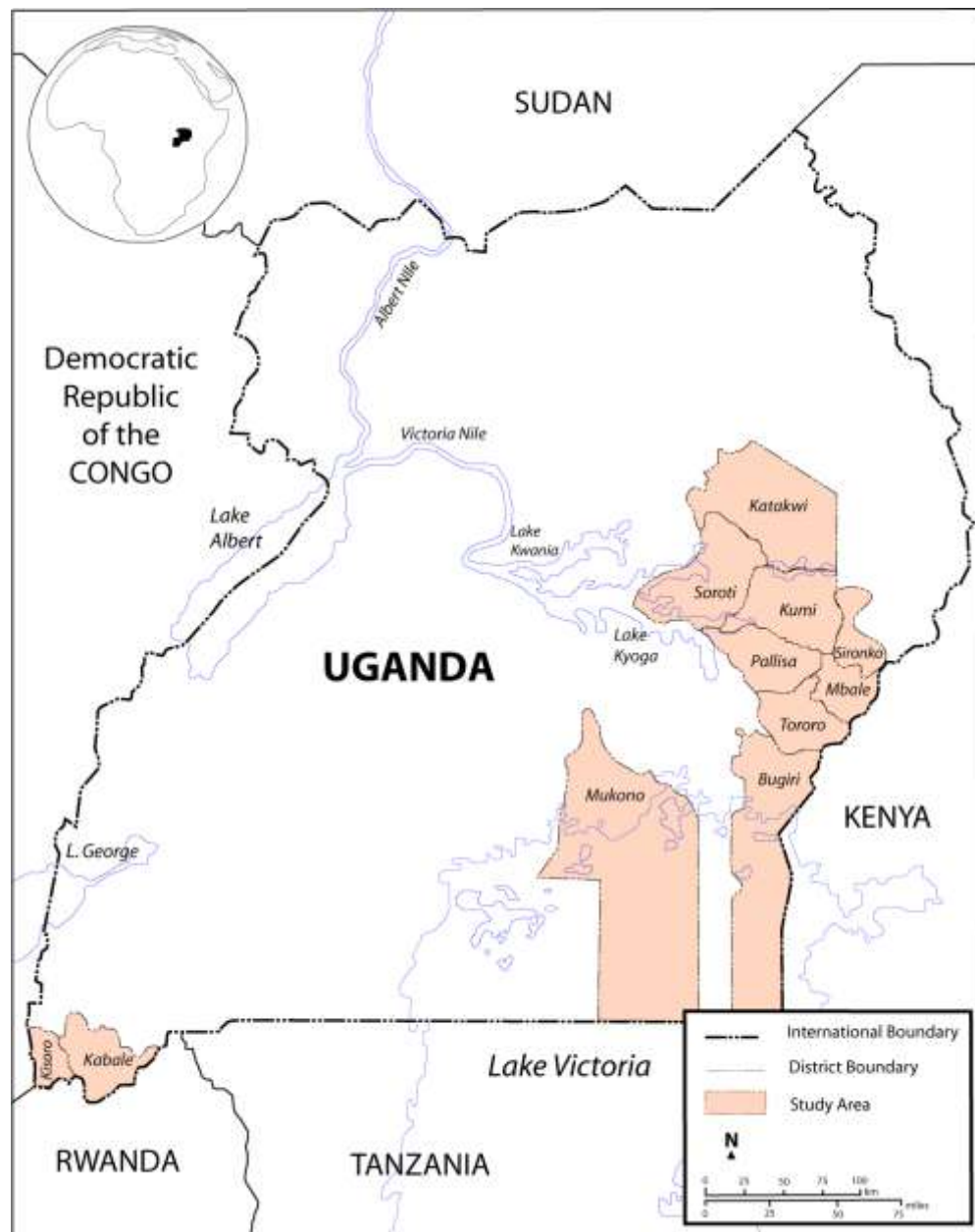


Figure 1: Map of study area

The theoretical framework, on which the interpretive model of this thesis is built, is presented in chapter 4. In this chapter, I address key perspectives that will be influential to the form my research will take. Post processualists such as Ian Hodder have strongly influenced me. They contend that archaeological interpretation must be contextual. Contextual interpretive approaches examine the way particular sets of components are related to a whole (Hodder 1986: 30). Specifically, Hodder engages the structured content of ideas and symbols, by examining how these ideas denoted by material culture themselves are involved in structuring society (*ibid.*: 121). Although contextual interpretive approaches have been used to understand various archaeological contexts, this is the first time such an approach is used to interpret the rock art of Uganda. This is my point of departure from previous studies.

The next chapter, chapter 5, is introduced with a quotation from Moke, an autochthonous elder of the Mbuti people of Ituri forest, who describes his understanding of his cosmology in his own words. Distinctive understandings of a gendered cosmos are presented throughout the chapter. This ethnographic understanding leads to a cosmological model for the interpretation of the geometric rock art of Uganda in Chapter 6. Drawing from these ethnographies, I put the categories of shapes and the sites, into contexts that render them meaningful. These contexts create an intellectual space for obtaining meaning and understanding in the interpretation of the rock art of Uganda.

Finally, I make use of the understanding of previous chapters to produce an overall interpretation of rock art sites. In this chapter, ideas already presented, meet and mingle. I consider a few lingering points outside my cosmological model. I argue that the study makes a valid attempt to write a new interpretation of the rock art of Uganda with far reaching implications in understanding this rock art tradition and identity of its makers.

Chapter One

AN ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

This study situates the rock art in Uganda within a broad environmental and cultural framework, because the locations of sites, migrations and interactions of people are all important issues for the interpretation of the rock art of Uganda. This framework derives from published literature on East Africa as a whole, since firm archaeological evidence for sequences in Uganda is limited in part because political events for the past 41 years rendered field research in several parts of Uganda difficult, if not impossible. I begin first with a general outline of the environmental and cultural history of East Africa and then focus on that of Uganda. I conclude with the issue of the identity of the possible authors of the rock art in Uganda.

Geography of the study area

Located in East Africa, Uganda is a landlocked country lying on the equator and comprising an area of 236,040km². It shares borders with Sudan in the North, the Democratic Republic of Congo in the west, Rwanda and Tanzania in the South, and Kenya in the East. As part of the African interior high plateau, much of Uganda is topographically classified as a plateau, with numerous small hills, valleys and extensive savannah plains.

The country lies in a cradle of mountains; on its east border with Kenya is Mt Elgon and Mt Moroto in the northeast. The Mufumbiro and Ruwenzori mountain ranges in the south-west rise to altitudes of over 5,000m. At 615m, Mwitanzige is the lowest point and at 5,119m, Margherita peak on Mt Stanley the highest, the third highest point in Africa. Uganda lies in the interlacustrine region of Africa, at the heart of the Great Lakes region with close to 15% or 36,330km² of its area

is made up of swamp or open water, and including Lakes Edward, Mwitanzige (Albert) and Victoria. This well watered, rich tillable land has abundant rainfall and a tropical climate. Most parts of Uganda receive good precipitation; annual amounts range from less than 20 inches (500mm) in the northeast to a high of 80 inches (2,000mm) in the Ssese islands of Lake Victoria.

Geology and Vegetation

Vegetation in Uganda is extremely diverse, varying from tropical rain forests in the south to savannah woodlands and semi-desert vegetation in the north.

Indigenous trees and shrubs, particularly in northern and eastern Uganda, are interspersed with open savannah grassland which includes *Acacia brevispica* ('wait-a-bit'), *Vitex maiensis*, *Vitex fischeri guerka* (Schlüter 1997). Rocky outcrops and dry flat land are mainly populated by *Haplocoelum Foliolosum*, *Erythrina Abyssinica lam*, *Acacia Senegal* and *Euphorbia Candelabrum*.

Dominant grasses in open savannah country include *Triandra forsk*/red oat grass, *Setaria Sphacelata*/dog tail grass, *Imperata cylindrical* cotton grass (mainly used for grazing and thatching), *Hyparrhenia Rufa*/zebra grass used in reed work and grazing, and *Lasiurus boiss*. Elephant or Napier grass is found in areas with well-distributed rainfall. This vegetation is underlain by a Precambrian basement that comprises by far the largest share of rocks in East Africa (Fig. 2). Uganda, like the rest of East Africa, consists mainly of isolated volcanic mountains, rocky outcrops and a plateau divided with long, narrow lakes and the Great Rift Valley.

Generally, the geology of Uganda is extensively of gneissic-granulitic rocks particularly in the northern, eastern and north-western regions (Schlüter 1997:7-10). In eastern Uganda, the Nyero rock shelter is one of six geosites in Uganda (Schlüter 2006: 241). Almost 60% of rock outcroppings, especially in northern and central Uganda are a high grade of gneissic-granulitic complex (Schlüter 2006: 238; 1997: 7-33). Minerals in the rocks of gneiss facies include, among others, iron oxides, pyroxene, biotite, calcium plagioclase and quartz.

Acid gneisses are grey while granite ranges from a grey to pink, with a foliation caused by the orientation of mica (Schlüter 1997: 35). Rocks in southern and south-western Uganda fall within the Ruwenzori Fold belt while those in western Uganda are of the Kibaran belt, a stratigraphic structural unit in East and Central Africa (Schlüter 1997: 11). Acidity and exfoliation strongly affect the survival of rock art in Uganda.

Accumulative data indicates that, like the rest of East Africa, Uganda experienced dynamic prehistoric climatic changes that had profound effects on its tropical environments and landscapes during the terminal Pleistocene and early Holocene (Kendall 1969: 121). Palaeoenvironmental evidence indicates that Lake Victoria was surrounded by a wide variety of vegetation ranging from savannah to evergreen forest. It included amongst its catchments areas, the Mau escarpment and Mount Elgon. From 14,500 BP until 12,000 BP Lake Victoria had no outlet. From 12,000 BP there was a probable outlet where the River Nile flowed into Lake Kyoga, but this outlet closed up around 10,000 BP (Kendall 1969: 170). The forest vegetation that first appeared after 12,000 BP declined during this closed interval of Lake Victoria (*ibid.*). Since this hiatus the lake has drained northwards via the river Nile. By 12,500 BP warmer and moister conditions began to pertain in the region, fluctuating to drier conditions (Butzer, Isaac, Richardson & Washbourne-Kamau 1972).

Palaeovegetational studies of the African continent have shown that between 30,000 BP and 20,000 BP, vast areas of the continent were extremely arid (Adams & Faure 1997). With the southward advancement of the Sahara resulting in a reduction of the equatorial rain forests, savannah woodlands were created in the Congo basin. This environment change may have been conducive for modern human dispersal.

Core samples from the bottom of Lake Victoria reveal that the period before 7,000 BP was a very wet phase in East Africa and that dense rainforest once covered the Lake Victoria shores (Livingstone 1975). However, rainfall

fluctuations between 7,000 BP and 6,000 BP created a shift from evergreen to semi-deciduous forest until 3,000 BP. Since then, centuries of anthropogenic factors have removed almost all the original tree cover (Kendall 1969: 170; Livingstone 1975: 261). For instance, the vegetation of one of 3,000 islands on Lake Victoria, Lolui island, is changed into a coastal fringe rain forest that extends into the hinterland as relic forest (Jackson, Gartlan & Posnansky 1965: 38). Lake Victoria, the second largest tropical freshwater lake in the world, is shallow, approximately 69km² and 40m deep on average with a maximum depth of 84m. It is relatively young; its current basin formed only 400,000 years ago, when westward-flowing rivers were dammed by geological up thrusts. The lake's shallowness, limited river inflow and large surface area relative to its volume make it vulnerable to climate changes. Cores taken from its bottom show that Lake Victoria has dried up completely three times since it formed (Reader 2001) (Table 1).

In Uganda, specifically in the eastern region, there is apujan clay soil in areas along the shores of Lake Kyoga. Loam clay is in and around the River Mpologoma Basin and the shores of Lake Kyoga. The areas of Kachumbala, Bukedea, Nyero, Kobwin, Ngora, and Kumi in Kumi District, which I have surveyed for rock art sites, have a mixture of loam clay, loam and sandy loam soils. On Lolui islands, the soils are ferrallitic and range from yellow-red, coarse sandy-clay loams to coarse sandy loams, becoming grey brown towards the shores (Jackson, *et al.* 1965: 576). Archaeological evidence indicates that this rich and varied Ugandan landscape has been populated by ancestors of modern humans for more than 2.5 million years, and there is evidence of Later Stone Age activity from about 35,000 years ago (Salas, Richards, De la Fe, Lareu, Sobrino, Sanchez-Diz, Macaulay & Carracedo 2002: 1082).

Table 1: Simplified environmental changes

Period	Climatic Change
Present	Lake Victoria drains northward via the River Nile Cultivation removed almost all original forest cover
3,000 BP	Deciduous Forest
6,000 BP	Rainfall Fluctuations cause a shift from evergreen to deciduous forest
7,000 BP	Wet phase Dense Forest covers the lake shore
10,000 BP	Dry Lake Victoria outlet closes Forest vegetation declines Outlet river flows to lake Kyoga Forest vegetation appears
12,000 BP	Global temperatures and humidity increase significantly (Lamb 1982:26), but not significantly enough for forest expansion until 8,000BP (Van Noten & Cahen 1982)
14,000 BP	No outlet for Lake Victoria Vegetation decreases
Palaeo-environment	Lake Victoria is surrounded by a wide variety of vegetation

Uganda is positioned along the central African rift valley. The beginning and end of many parts of the dated archaeological sequence in Uganda appear to correlate with past climatic periods and their transition, suggesting that movement of people may have been climatically controlled or induced (Dyson-Hudson & Smith 1978; Ambrose 1982: 137). Movements of people into and around the East African landscape was and still is a subject of research interest for archaeologists, linguists, historians and geneticists. Since the 1950s, archaeological and historical research in the region mainly focused on establishing cultural sequences and correlating archaeological sequences with language families, contributing to our current understanding of East African prehistory (Ambrose 1982; Robertshaw 1990).

Early Inhabitants

In this chapter, I trace the peopling of Uganda within the broader context of East Africa since modern national borders were non-existent during prehistoric times. I portray a possible prehistoric sequence for Uganda drawing on associations and connections between archaeological, linguistic, anthropological, historical and genetic evidence.

Archaeological sources provide evidence that East Africa was inhabited from about 2.6 million years ago (Plummer 2005: 55, 65). Traces of the Early Stone Age (ESA) have been found at Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania and Turkana region in Kenya where the earliest archaeological evidence traces to 2.5 - 2.6 million years ago (Schick & Toth 2006: 9,16-17). Other hominins include *Homo habilis* dated 2.4 - 1.6 million years ago and the famous 'Turkana boy' *Homo ergaster* dated 1.8 to 1.0 million years ago. In Uganda the ESA is traced to Nyabushozi in the Lake Mwitanzige Basin and dates to around 1.5 million years ago by Oldowan hominins, probably opportunistic omnivores who made and used stone tools (Schick & Toth 2006: 13).

From around 1.4 million years ago, new technological elements emerged described as the Acheulean Industrial Complex. This Complex, dated from about 1.6 million to 300,000 years ago, is defined by the appearance of bifaces. Current evidence indicates that the Acheulean-Middle Stone Age transition occurred between 300 to 250,000 years ago (Marean & Assefa 2005: 103). Despite problems with dating, the Middle Stone Age (MSA) in East Africa is believed to date from as early as about 280/240,000 to 40,000 cal BP (Prendergast, Luque, Domínguez-Rodrigo, Diez-Martin, Mabulla & Barba 2007: 218). Malewa Gorge in the Kenyan Central Rift yielded a date of 240,000 years, while Baringo, also in Kenya, dated to 280, 000 years (Marean & Assefa 2005: 109).

In Uganda, MSA remains are found in the Sango hills at the mouth of the Kagera River. Further MSA evidence occurs on the west coast of Lake Victoria and Nsongezi (O'Brien 1939: 11; Van Riet Lowe 1952: 62-80; Cole 1964; Phillipson 1985: 84-5), in the lake terraces on Buvuma island in Lake Victoria and at Magosi in Karamoja (O'Brien 1939: 11; Nelson & Posnansky 1970; Posnansky, Reid & Ashley 2005: 97). The MSA is characterised predominately by prepared cores, rare bifacial points, un-retouched flakes and flake-based lithic industries that replaced cleavers and hand axes of the Oldowan sequence. The diversity of retouched points is indicative of regional variation (Prendergast, *et al.* 2007: 218).

East African MSA populations are believed to have exploited the fauna of their rich and varied ecosystems. MSA economies focused primarily on plant foods throughout most of the year, supplemented by hunting (Marean & Assefa 2005: 110). Ostrich egg-shell beads from Enkapune Ya Muto rock shelter in Kenya as well as similar beads from Mumba Cave in Tanzania indicate that the MSA/LSA transition occurred prior to 40,000 years (Ambrose 1998: 377; Conard 2005: 312) with others placing it to earlier than 59,000 to 62,000 years ago (Skinner, Hay, Masao & Blackwell 2003: 1365). Evidence from Matupi Cave in the Democratic Republic of Congo dates the transition to more than 40,000 BP (Van Noten 1977). However, Marean and Assefa posit that “there is little direct evidence for symbolic behaviour anywhere in the world prior to 40,000 BP”(Marean & Assefa

2005: 116). According to Ambrose (1998: 379) the MSA/LSA transition occurred earlier in equatorial Africa than in southern Africa.

Excavations from Enkapune Ya Muto dating to a minimum age of 39,900 BP mark the earliest occurrence of LSA in East Africa (Ambrose 1998: 388). At Buvuma island in Lake Victoria and Magosi in Karamoja, north-eastern Uganda LSA assemblages date to about 12,000 BP. Similar assemblages at Turkana, in north-western Kenya date to between 8,250 and 4,700 BP. All these sites indicate a hunter-gatherer-fisher economy (Van Noten 1971; Ambrose 1982: 119, 133; Brooks & Robertshaw 1990: 151). LSA assemblages are characterised by bipolar cores, choppers, long blades and microlithic technology, small backed microliths, awls, hammers, thumbnail scrapers and burins, bored and grooved heavy-duty stone tools, polished bone tools, fishing harpoons, bows, arrows, and tortoise shell bowls.

Further excavations in Uganda revealed ostrich eggshell, fresh water mussel shell and land snail shell in Karamoja (Nelson 1973: 62). Typical LSA artefacts were also found with pottery in excavations at Nyero in Kumi (Lawrance 1953; Harwich 1961; Posnansky & Nelson 1968). The presence of pottery at Kumi is probably evidence of interaction with Neolithic communities. Kanyore island in the Kagera River revealed quartz based lithics, Kanyore pottery ware, large cores, a 'heavily used lump of red ochre' and numerous freshwater oyster shells (Chapman 1967: 169; Gifford-Gonzalez 1998). On Lake Victoria, excavations at Tonge and Munyama cave on Buvuma Island and Nakisito on Bugaia Island suggest an LSA occupation for the period between 15,000 BP to 10,000 BP (Nenquin 1971: 132; Van Noten 1971; Sassoon 1973: 9; Ambrose 1982). LSA technology continued in use well into the Early Iron Age (EIA) (Brooks & Robertshaw 1990; Phillipson 1985; Prendergast, *et al.* 2007: 220). Therefore, in East Africa, we see a continuous sequence of LSA assemblages from about 39,900 BP to around 1,000 BP.

Although the northern lake islands of Buvuma and Bugaia islands on Lake Victoria indicate evidence of LSA occupation, the archaeology of Lolui Island shows that, during the MSA, Lolui was occupied and that it was probably part of the mainland at that time. According to Posnansky, Reid and Ashley (2005), Lolui Island was not occupied again until the arrival of Bantu-speaking Urewe-using groups at about 2,500 BP and 1,200 BP (Posnansky, *et al.* 2005: 82, 97). Although there is no evidence of **occupation** of Lolui Islands by LSA populations, it is probable that they **did use** the island for other activities, such as rituals.

In overview, during the LSA, population numbers were low and occupation sporadic across East Africa. These microlithic and bone tool-producing people lived in rock shelters, open-air sites and along lakeshores. They probably used these areas for residential, hunting, fishing and ritual activities. They combined hunting and fishing with gathering, surviving on a diet of aquatic and plant resources, ostrich eggs, meat and fish. LSA settlement is believed to have been nomadic and semi-nomadic, which in time led to specialisation in tools such as bone harpoons used in fishing. The importance of symbolic behaviour among LSA people is marked by the use of body ornaments (ostrich egg-shell or shell beads), the occurrence of ochre (e.g. at Magosi and Nyero) and evidence of rock art at LSA sites (Prendergast, *et al.* 2007: 219). Who these LSA people were genetically and linguistically is difficult to determine archaeologically.

The emerging pattern of LSA specialisation is seen in the occurrence of Kanyore ware pottery, believed to span the period 8,200-8000 to 3,000-2,400 cal BP, predominantly found around the Lake Victoria Basin, as well as in western Kenya, northern Tanzania, the Mwanza region, Mumba Höhle and Nasera rock shelter in Tanzania (Lane, Ashley, Seitsonen, Harvey, Mire & Odede 2007: 63; Prendergast, *et al.* 2007: 219). Kanyore is associated with delayed return hunter-gatherers. The presence of domesticated ovicaprids at Kanyore sites in western Kenya may indicate a very late transition to animal husbandry and domestication for Kanyore-using communities (Lane, *et al.* 2007: 78), although there is strong

evidence to suggest that Kansyore has its ultimate origins in the middle Nile region. It is highly probable that these specialised hunter-gatherers were an intruding group different from the earlier LSA populations. It is also possible that LSA people acquired pottery through exchange and gradually acquired pottery-making skills from early pastoral communities. Specialisation in pottery ultimately led to the domestication of plants and animals. This domestication, hence food production, is believed to have occurred in the south-east Saharan regions before 7,500 BP (Phillipson 1985: 118; Ehret 2003: 164). According to Ehret (2003: 163) food producers “have material advantages that tend to facilitate the expansion of their cultures, economies and therefore languages into regions previously occupied by hunting and gathering peoples”, without necessarily prevailing over them. Whereas East Africa has a multiplicity of cultures and lifestyles, ancient ethnic differences across cultural boundaries were not diluted so that an initial appearance of a discrete archaeological culture, such as pottery traditions, may represent a single linguistic group (Ambrose 1982: 108) (see Table 2).

Present East African communities are the outcome of complex historical interactions (Soper 1982: 223). A significant indicator of interaction is pottery amongst LSA groups. Some researchers suggest that pottery provides the only common culturally diagnostic factor of migration, but represents a migration of pottery **styles** rather than of **people**. However, these styles could not have moved so fast, with such typological consistency, unless carried by significant numbers of people (*ibid.*: 238). It is possible initially for pottery to enter the archaeological record through exchange, however, a persistent presence of a particular style of pottery over a wide area, suggests the presence of a distinctive group identity. Huffman (1989; 2002: 1) argues that pottery styles imply that makers of similar ceramics shared a common language, since ceramic decoration can express group identity because the decorations form a repeated code of cultural symbols.

Table 2: Tentative archaeological sequence for Uganda

PERIOD	CULTURAL SEQUENCE					DOCUMENTED LOCATIONS - UGANDA
0 200 400 600 800					IRON AGE	
1,000 BP 1,500 BP 2,000 BP			PASTORAL "NEOLITHIC"	PASTORAL IRON AGE ▫ Elementeitan ware	EARLY IRON AGE ▫ Urewe ware	▫ northern Chobi area along the Victoria Nile ▫ Buvuma island, Lake Victoria
2,400 - 2,500 BP			▫ Nderit, Maringishu, Narosura & Akira ware			▫ Karamoja
3,000 BP	LATE STONE AGE					▫ Lake Victoria shores
4,500	▫ microlithic technology ▫ stone & bone tools ▫ body ornamentation ▫ rock art	LATER STONE AGE ▫ Kansyore ware				▫ Rock shelters around Lake Victoria Basin
8,000 BP						▫ Lolui, Bugaia & Buvuma islands, Lake Victoria ▫ Eastern & north-eastern Uganda
40,000 BP 59,000 BP 62,000 BP	Middle Stone Age – Late Stone Age Transition					▫ Magosi, Karamoja ▫ Sango hills at the mouth of the Kagera river
280/240,000 ya	MIDDLE STONE AGE ▫ prepared cores ▫ flake-based lithic industries ▫ blades					▫ Buvuma islands, Lake Victoria ▫ Lolui islands, Lake Victoria
300/280,000 ya	EARLY STONE AGE Acheullean - MSA transition	Acheullean - MSA transition				▫ Nsongezi, Ankole ▫ Kafu & Musizi Rivers
1.4 m - 300,000 ya	▫ cleavers ▫ hand axes	Acheullean complex				▫ Lake Mwitanzige Basin
2.5 - 2.6 m ya						▫ Lake Victoria

Immigrants

Before 5,000 BP, hunter-gatherers who also fished were the only inhabitants of Uganda. A combination of archaeological, linguistic, genetic and cultural evidence suggests that change occurred when the hunter-gatherer world was intruded upon by a series of outsiders. In East Africa, a major archaeological change is the arrival of domesticated animals. Current evidence suggests that pottery and domesticated animals seem to have arrived as a cultural package. Pottery has been found in association with the faunal remains of domestic animals and where there is evidence for hunting. Evidence for domestication occurs in the form of generalized, mixed cattle, sheep and goat pastoralism, in the northern Kenyan lowlands bordering Lake Turkana, in highland central and southern Kenya (Marean 1992; Marshall 2000; Marshall & Hildebrand 2002) and western Kenya (Karega-Munene 2002). This evidence also indicates that the cultural package was a result of a long-term continuous southward migration of small groups of pastoralists from Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia (Bower 1991; Marshall 2000). Generally, pastoralists depend on their hoofed domestic animals for food production and organize settlement and mobility strategies to suit the dietary needs of their animals (Dyson-Hudson & Dyson-Hudson 1980; Gifford-Gonzalez 2005: 188). There is no evidence that early pastoralists in East Africa used grain, although they may have practised cultivation (Smith 1992: 133).

In East Africa, the first pastoralists are known as the Pastoral Neolithic (PN). The characteristics of these early pastoral groups are that they relied substantially on domestic animals for livelihood, had no crop-production, used pottery and employed typical LSA technologies for the manufacture of edged tools. The PN had a lengthy and complex development, having begun before 4,000 BP and lasting until about 1,300 BP (Soper & Golden 1969; Bower & Nelson 1978: 562; Mehlman 1979; Ambrose 1982: 133). Then, there is the 'Pastoral Iron Age' (PIA) in which cultures with pastoral economies take-on iron technology.

The Pastoral Neolithic

There is no agreement as to the original homeland of the Proto-Afrasan speakers although they are generally believed to have originated in northeast Africa (Ehret 2003: 165). Southern and Eastern-Cushitic languages belong to the Afrasan (Afro-Asiatic) family. Most scholars' agree that the split in the Cushitic language (into Southern and Eastern) occurred in the southern Red Sea hills region (*ibid.*). Cushitic-speakers are believed have practised pastoralism over a long period because Proto-Cushitic vocabulary contains words diagnostic of a well-developed pastoral economy (Ehret 2003: 164).

Southern Cushites

Archaeological, linguistic and historical sources in East Africa provide evidence that an immigrant stock-keeping people from the fringe of the south Ethiopian highlands arrived in northern Kenya around the Lake Turkana area and intruded upon the hunter-gatherer communities as early as 4,500 BP. The Lake Turkana ceramic, bone harpoon-using, hunter-gatherer tradition was replaced with a pastoral tradition after 4,500 BP (Ehret 1974; 1998: 10; Barthelme 1977: 7; Ambrose 1982: 113). Ambrose refers to these stock-keepers as the 'Lowland Savannah Pastoral Neolithic' (Ambrose 1982: 119).

Cattle and caprines (goats and sheep), large quantities of fish and some wild animal bones appear in the archaeological record of the central Rift Valley of Kenya (e.g. Enkapune Ya Muto), and parts of the northern lowlands bordering Lake Turkana around 4,000 BP. Archaeological evidence for domestication becomes more common after 3,800 BP, occurring in highland, central, southern and western Kenya around 3,400–3,000 BP (Ambrose 1998: 380; Lane 2004: 247; Lane, *et al.* 2007: 62-3; Prendergast, *et al.* 2007: 220).

These immigrant pastoralists, the Southern Cushities, are believed to have interred their dead beneath stone cairns, between rocks, sometimes accompanied with stone bowls and stone platters (Leakey 1966; Sassoon 1968). They built flat-roofed houses with rectangular floors, kept cattle in circular pole fences and used

mountain bamboo for arrow quivers (Ehret 1998: 172-175). Around 3,500 BP, the Southern Cushites moved further southwards through the Kenyan highlands to the plateau of northern Tanzania (Ambrose 1982; Ehret 2003: 168).

Archaeological evidence, oral tradition and historical sources in the highlands of southern Kenya, in the Central Rift valley areas and highland zones of the Mau Escarpment of northern Tanzania provide evidence for a pottery-stone tool using economy based on herding dating to between 3,300-1,300 BP (Ambrose 1982: 113; Smith 1992: 81; Ehret 1998: 10). Ambrose refers to this cluster as the 'Highland Savannah Pastoral Neolithic' (Ambrose 1982: 119). Southern Cushities are believed to be ancestors of the modern Alagwa, Aranamik, Iraqw and Burunge of northern Tanzania. Modern Dahalo speak a Southern Cushitic language adopted from their neighbours, but they originally are not descendants of Southern Cushites (see Blench 2006: 139-162).

Eastern Cushites

Another PN group, the Eastern Cushites, originated from the fringe of the south Ethiopian highlands about 4,000 BP and moved into northeast Uganda, northern and eastern Kenya, south to Mount Kenya arriving at the coast of the Indian Ocean by about 2,300 BP. Modern representatives of the Eastern Cushities are the Yaaku hunters of Mts. Elgon and Kenya (Ambrose 1982: 113), the Arbore herders and cultivators in the Lake Turkana region as well as the Elmolo fishermen of east Turkana. They are believed to have settled in the area about 2,000-3,000 years ago displacing or absorbing the Southern Cushites (Heine, Rottland & Vossen 1979; Ambrose 1982: 113-4). Later Eastern Cushities include the Oromo (historically called Galla) people of eastern and north-eastern Africa. They represent one of largest of the Cushitic-speaking groups inhabiting the Horn of Africa. The Oromo, predominantly of the northern region of Oromia Ethiopia, spread to northern Kenya as far south as the Lamu Islands.

In sum, faunal remains from most known PN sites reveal evidence of domestic stock and some evidence of hunting, suggesting that these stock-keeping people

practised a mixed pastoral, hunting and fishing economy. According to Ambrose's staple carbon and nitrogen isotope analysis, PN people subsisted on a diet high in animal protein - milk and blood (Ambrose 1986: 722). They produced a few mainly undecorated, distinctive and diagnostic potteries. PN pottery traditions include Nderit and the later phase Maringishu traditions, dating to about 4,860–3,000 BP (Ambrose 1998: 386; Lane, *et al.* 2007: 63), and Narosura and Akira traditions dating to about 3,000 –1,300 BP. These ceramic traditions, apart from Nderit, span the area south of Turkana, some going as far south as the Lake Nakuru Basin (Smith 2005a: 153), reflecting a southward migration. Bower (1991) suggests that a further shift occurred from 1,900–1,300 BP marked by a return to more highly mobile settlement strategies and an increased importance of foraged wild resources, even among groups of previously specialized pastoralists. This later period of the PN, is generally represented by Akira pottery. The presence of Southern Cushitic loan words in almost every language between Lake Victoria and the Indian Ocean suggests a period of prolonged contact with other immigrant groups.

The Pastoral Iron Age: the Nilotes

The production and use of iron among early pastoralist communities in eastern Africa appears to have begun relatively late. A shift to a PIA is indicated in the archaeological excavations at Deloraine Farm. These yielded the remains of cattle and cereals as well as evidence for the manufacture and use of iron implements dating to around 1,100 BP (Bower & Nelson 1978; cf. Collett & Robertshaw 1983: 71). Other archaeological evidence occurs at Enkapune Ya Muto dating to c. 1,295 BP (Ambrose, 1998: 385).

After the Cushites, Central Sudanic-speaking pastoral groups arrived in East Africa between about 2,500 and 2,000 BP (Ambrose 1982: 114). Linguistic evidence indicates that iron-smelting and iron-working trace back to these Central Sudanic-speaking (Nilo-Saharan family) pastoralists in the Horn of Africa before 3,000 BP (Ehret 1998: 15). According to Ehret (2003: 170) Proto-Nilotic-speaking societies appeared between the White and Blue Nile rivers around 5,500

BP. They expanded and intruded into the land of the Cushites, assimilating and absorbing them into Nilotic societies. Ehret further posits that between 5,500 and 3,500 BP three groups emerged from the ancient Proto-Nilotic community in the southern central area of the Sudan: the Proto-Southern Nilotes, Proto-Eastern Nilotes and Proto-Western Nilotes.

Proto-Southern Nilotes

The history of the Southern Nilotes (Proto-Central Sudanic people) indicates that they originated in the Proto-Nilotic homeland, the southern central area of the Sudan. From here, they moved southwards, enduring a long period of contact with the Eastern Cushites. To the southwest, they had contact with Southern Cushites and westwards they met with the expanding Bantu-speakers. Southern Nilotes moved in different directions, south through eastern Uganda from the Uganda-Sudan border arriving in the western Kenya highlands between about 2,500 BP and 2,000 BP and then they moved further south to south-western Uganda, and as far as the Lake Eyasi area in northern Tanzania (Ambrose 1982: 114). Southern Nilotes are believed to have practised fishing, raised goats and sheep, cultivated sorghum and pearl millet (Ehret 1998). They are believed to be the makers of the Elementeitan tradition dated to about 3,300 and 1,300 BP (Lane *et al.* 2007: 63). Relatively large microlithic blade blanks, finished tools, and a standardized size in geometric microliths characterize the Elmenteitan lithic industry.

Eastern Cushitic loanwords found amongst Southern Nilotes indicate enduring interaction in north-eastern Uganda (Ambrose 1982: 114). Southern Nilotes initiated their youths into age sets; circumcised both males and females; built round houses with conical roofs and used leather for clothing and containers. According to Greenberg's (1963) classification, Southern Nilotic speaking modern representatives are the Datoga pastoralists of Tanzania (Ambrose 1982: 114), probably the makers of Lelesu pottery (Ehret 1998: 189). The other group commonly referred to as Kalenjin comprises the Kipsigis, the Nandi, the Tugen,

the Marakwet, the Keiyo, the Pokot and the Sabaot, who live on the slopes of Mount Elgon near the Ugandan border.

Eastern Nilotes

It is suggested that the Proto-Eastern Nilotes emerged from the more ancient Proto-Nilotic group and arrived in the area east of the Nile around 3,000 BP or slightly earlier, in the fourth millennium BP (Ehret 1980: 5, 7; Vossen 1982: 470). Loan word evidence indicates that Proto-Eastern Nilotic-speakers remained in the area for more than 1,000 years (Vossen 1982: 470). From about 3,000 to 2,000 BP, having established themselves in the Nile valley, Proto-Eastern Nilotes split into two linguistically discernable divisions: the Proto-Bari and the Proto-Teso-Lutuko-Maa (Vossen 1982: 49, 470-2). The latter group split-up again, forming the Proto-Teso-Turkana and the Proto-Lutuko-Maa societies (*ibid.*). The Bari-speaking people moved west of the River Nile, and today they are found on the modern border of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. The Lotuko-speakers in the central area migrated southeast, settling south of the Imatong, Dongotono and Lutuko Mountains in present-day north-eastern Uganda. East of the Lotuko is a small cluster of Teso-Turkana speakers. The majority of Teso-Turkana speakers are the Jie, Karamojong and Teso in north and central-eastern Uganda, and the Turkana of north-western and western Kenya. Ongamo-Maa speakers are confined to Kenya and Tanzania (Vossen 1982: 21).

Linguistic evidence indicates that speakers of an early form of the Karamojong-Teso language lived in northern Uganda as early as 950 BP (Vossen 1982: 49; after Ehret 1971: 67). Descendents of this population established themselves in the region between Mount Moroto and Mount Elgon on both sides of the modern border between Uganda and Kenya. These groups are probably the Proto-Eastern Nilotes who inhabited north-western Kenya and north-eastern Uganda between about 3,000 to 1,000 BP (Vossen 1982: 474). Proto-Eastern Nilotes were potters who practised a mixed pastoral, hunting and fishing economy (Ambrose 1982: 120).

Western Nilotes

According to Ehret, linguistic evidence suggests that the Western Nilotes, like their Eastern counterparts, engaged in a series of language divisions and cultural expansions. As early as around 5,500 BP, Proto-Western Nilotes diverged into two: the Proto-Burn and the Proto-Jii groups (Ehret 2003: 172). The Proto-Jii had two major expansions: between 4,500 -3,000 BP and between 1,500 -1,000 BP. In the second expansion, some descendants of the Proto-Jii expanded into the area of the southern Middle Nile Basin displacing and absorbing the Northern Sudanic communities they encountered (Ehret 2003: 173). Their descendants, the Luo, moved further south occupying large areas of northern Uganda where they settled among Eastern Nilotes, and western Kenya where they settled among Bantu-speakers between the late 1400s and 1800s (Ogot 1967: 67; Ehret 2003: 173). The Luo gradually assimilated all the groups they encountered (Ehret 2003: 173). According to Vossen (1982), the Acholi, Shilluk, Dinka, Luo, Nuer, and Langi are Western Nilotes.

Along the Great Rift Valley and adjacent areas, many of the present ethnic groups are a result of PIA economies that emerged and consolidated themselves over time. Pastoral societies therefore existed in East Africa for almost 2,000 years before Bantu-speaking agro-pastoral farmers arrived.

Agro-pastoral farmers: Bantu-speakers

The early 1960s saw researchers pre-occupied with the origins and spread of agriculturalists. Early views, largely derived from linguistic studies, held that early agro-pastoralists spread in a north-south movement. Since the 1970s two views, one supporting a continuous wave of migration (Soper 1971: 29-30), and the other, the 'shot-gun-theory' where a homogenous culture moved rapidly (Huffman 1970), are still debated.

Proto-Bantu

Vansina (1990: 35) suggests that around 5,000 BP, hunter-gatherers near the equatorial forests and southern Cameroon became more sedentary, acquired

ceramics and began to supplement their hunting and gathering with agriculture and trapping. These Proto-Bantu-speakers encountered other hunter-gatherers as they moved from the Benue valley around the Benue-Cross Rivers, in what is now south-eastern Nigeria and Cameroon. Perhaps triggered by a harsh Sahara environment and pressure from the migration of people out of this arid area, the Proto-Bantu-speakers expanded into the equatorial rain forest region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Ehret 1982: 58; Vansina 1995: 52). Proto-Bantu-speakers lived mainly along rivers and lakeshores, neither smelted nor used metals, used Neolithic tools, gathered and cultivated, hunted and practised fishing and boating (Ehret 1982; Vansina 1990: 49; Schoenbrun 1994/95: 270). These converted hunter-gatherer-fishers then split into Eastern and Western Bantu-speakers (Vansina 1990: 49). According to Reid (2005: 590), these first Bantu-speaking farmers had no access to either cattle or grain agriculture.

By about 4,000 BP, Western Bantu-speakers occupied the area east of the Cross River in western Cameroon, the Bamileke plateau and the lowlands near the ocean (Vansina 1990: 49). A convergence of linguistic, archaeological and biological information shows major migrations into Central Africa by farmers from south-western Cameroon (Cavalli-Sforza 1986: 361). They made pottery, farmed yams and practised oil palm oil cultivation (Vansina 1990: 49).

Around 3,500 BP Eastern Bantu-speakers advanced eastwards taking on a strong reliance on iron. They also made pottery, planted cereals and yams. Later, around 3,000 BP, in a series of migrations, a more rapid second phase of expansion of Eastern Bantu-speakers began beyond the forests into the southern and eastern savannah lands of Africa. Ehret (1982: 59) disagrees with the view of a Bantu expansion around the fringes of the forest, and with those who suggest a dash through the forest. He argues that if the Proto-Bantu period dates to 5,000 BP, then the Proto-Bantu were forest people and emerged from the forest (Ehret 1982: 62). If the period is in the later fifth millennium BP then the Proto-Bantu could be forest or savannah people due to changes in the climate.

The largest group of people to migrate to East Africa, Bantu-speakers, combined both iron and stone tool technology to exploit domesticated and wild animals and plants (Bower, Nelson, Waibel & Wandibba 1977; Bower & Nelson 1978; Ambrose 1984; Kirama 1993: 484; Phillipson 1993). Around 2,500 BP, Eastern Bantu-speakers reached the Great Lakes region from where they expanded south to Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and the Indian Ocean coast (Schoenbrun 1998: 42-43).

During their expansion, the proto-Eastern Bantu-speaking farmers (Ehret's Mashariki Bantu) encountered forest hunter-gatherer groups (Vansina 1990: 56; Schoenbrun 1998: 68) and pastoralists, with whom they exchanged diverse products, food production techniques and iron-producing methods (Schoenbrun 1998: 69-71; Lane 2005: 682). Prior to interaction with farmers, linguistic evidence from the central Rift Valley of Kenya indicates that hunter-gatherers had interacted with herders for close to a millennium. This interaction enabled the development of a wide range of social relations as well as a shift in subsistence from a hunter-gatherer-fisher economy to theft or adoption of stock-keeping, as evidenced at Enkapune Ya Muto rock shelter (Lane 2004: 254). Lane (2004: 255) suggests that evidence for interaction in the archaeological record may also be because of "ethnic shifting". Archaeological evidence shows that LSA sites overlapped with Iron Age sites and that there were long periods of interaction between hunter-gatherers and farmers (Vansina 1990: 56). There is no doubt also that Bantu-speaking farmers drew aspects of culture and belief from earlier peoples (Ehret 1998: 2-3).

Urewe

Before the major movement out of the Lake Victoria Basin, some Eastern Bantu-speaking, iron-using agro-pastoral communities settled at Urewe, along the coastal fringes of Lake Victoria and the highland Western Rift between 2,500 and 1,200 BP (Robertshaw & Collet 1993; Ehret 1998: 185; Posnansky, *et al.* 2005: 82; Reid 2005: 590). These agro-pastoral communities are associated with Urewe ware pottery. Urewe pottery is characterised by bevelled rims, decorated motifs

and a thumb imprint or 'dimple' base. The earliest EIA dated sites are those associated with the adoption of iron metallurgy, crop production and Urewe ware (Lane 2005: 682; Reid 2005: 590). Traces of Urewe pottery are concentrated on prime agricultural land and pollen sequences demonstrate land clearance (Reid 1994/95) either for cultivation or charcoal for iron smelting. In Uganda the Urewe tradition has been found in the interlacustrine region and the northern Chobi area in the north along the Victoria Nile, to the Lake Victoria Buvuma island (Posnansky 1961: 9; Sassoon 1973; Schoenbrun 1994/95: 270) dating to between 2,400 and 1,750 BP (Schoenbrun 1994/95: 270; Gifford-Gonzalez 1998: 170). The earliest Urewe sites all lie to the west of Lake Victoria, concentrated around Buhaya, in western Tanzania (Soper 1982; Kirama 1993: 485; Lane 2005: 682), the southern shores of Lake Victoria and the Rwanda-Burundi Kivu-Rusizi River region (Lane 2005: 682). In Kenya, Urewe pottery is linked to iron-using groups on the north-eastern side of Lake Victoria (the Yala and Alego). It occurs in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Nenquin 1959).

Later, another group of eastern Bantu-speaking farmers, the probable makers of Kwale ware (Ehret 1998: 187), moved across central northern Tanzania into the Tanzanian highlands and the eastern edge of the Rift Valley in Central Kenya, all the way to Kwale on the Shimba hills, south west of Mombasa (Lane 2005: 683). By 1,600 BP, the Kwale ware farmers had settled along the slopes of Mount Kenya and moved as far north as Somalia (Ambrose 1982: 115; Ehret 1998: 184). Others moved south, along the Indian Ocean coast, eventually reaching South Africa.

When the Bantu-speaking farmers arrived in Uganda, they found both pastoralists and hunter-gatherers that genetically and linguistically were the scattered remnants of the aboriginal inhabitants (Nzita & Niwampa 1998). In nearly all the areas in which the Bantu-speakers moved they absorbed the vast majority of the preceding populations. Of these preceding populations, the only aboriginal survivors today are the scattered groups of Pygmies found in the central African rain forests, along the Uganda-Congo border, and a few Cushitic and Nilotic-

speaking peoples between Lake Victoria and the Zanzibar coast. Modern Bantu-speakers are predominantly mixed farmers like the Ganda, Gisu, Kamba, Chagga, Luhya, Kikuyu and Pokomo (Ambrose 1982: 115).

In East Africa, varied environments enabled discrete groups practising different economies to live side by side without overt intensive competition (herders in the open savannah; farmers in the woodlands and bushes; hunter-gatherers in the montane forests and arid bush) (Ambrose 1982: 109). Through the study of vocabularies, previous contact is apparent since loan word strata relate to actual movements of people encountered, often revealing contacts far beyond human memory (Ambrose 1982: 109-111; Nurse 1982: 204). For example, although the languages of farmers have replaced original hunter-gatherer languages, traces of this original language are found in names for forest animals and plants (Cavalli-Sforza 2001: 170). Various groups in modern Uganda continue to practise a hunting and gathering life-style, yet they may not necessarily be among the original inhabitants of Uganda.

The hunter-gatherers of Uganda

During their expansion, the early Bantu-speaking farmers encountered Pygmy groups, whom they apparently called *túá*, (Vansina 1990: 56; Schoenbrun 1998: 68). *Túá* is a term designating “bushpeople” (hunters and gatherers), small hunter-gatherer, autochthon and dwarf, now used to designate ‘Pygmy’ (Vansina 1990: 56, 279). The origin of the word “Pygmy” by which these hunter-gatherers are described is not derived from a name of any African group of people (Hewlett 1996: 215). The actual etymological origin of ‘Pygmy’ is the Greek word, *Pugmaioi* or *pugna*, meaning an ancient length measured from the elbow to the wrist, or to the knuckle of the second digit, about 13 inches.

Homer first used the term *Pygmaioi* around 2,800 BP to emphasise short stature, a diminutive human being (Hewlett 1996: 215). In Greek mythology, this was the size of a race of tiny, black-skinned people. In Latin the word assumed the more modern recognizable form, *Pygmae*, and came to be applied as a generic

reference to various western-African peoples—the BaMbuti, the BaTwa, the BaYaka and the BaGyeli. Blench (1999: 41) suggests that Pygmies are related to the Adamawa-Ubangian/Bantu-speaking people who evolved as a group of hunters and lived by seasonal exploitation of the rain forest. According to Schaldeberg (1999), ‘Pygmy’ refers to people of low status who were hunter-gatherers and regarded as the aboriginal inhabitants of the land. Today in Africa, ‘Pygmy’ is commonly used as a term designating the small stature of Pygmy peoples of the equatorial forests and adjoining areas across eastern and central Africa. No word has since emerged to replace the word ‘Pygmy’ (Hewlett 1996: 215).

A major factor contributing to the notion of early Bushmen peopling of eastern Africa is the persistent image of the Bushmen as **the** African hunter-gatherer and the suggestion that living hunter-gatherer communities are remnants of these archaeological hunter-gatherer populations (Wilson 1970; Schepartz 1988: 58). East African archaeological and palaeoanthropological evidence is often compared with the better-known southern Africa evidence, which held Bushmen as the prototype for prehistoric populations (Schepartz 1988: 58). This is probably because research in East Africa in the past was concerned with attempting to correlate archaeological assemblages with language families (Ambrose 1982; Robertshaw 1990:89).

Debate on the identity of the East African hunter-gatherers has been ongoing for decades: one group arguing for the existence of Bushmen in East Africa and, the other, for Pygmies. Both groups accept variation in hunter-gatherer societies across Africa. Homer, Herodotus, Aristotle, Pliny and Pomponius Mela, according to Aristotle, had mentioned the existence of Pygmies in Greek mythology as ‘a race of little men’. Apart from Homer and Pliny, the rest of the authors referred to the Pygmies as living in Africa, north of the equator (Daly 1892: 19). In 1870, anthropologist, Dr. George August Schweinfurth (1874) ‘discovered’ the Aka Pygmies in equatorial Africa and popularised the myth about them (cf. Frankland 2001: 239). Confirmation of the existence of Pygmy

people was strengthened by Colin Turnbull's evocative work among the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri rain forest.

According to Cavalli-Sforza (1986), African Pygmies were seen to comprise of a diverse category of people historically understood to be the largest autochthonous group of hunter-gatherers in the tropical rain forest (Cavalli-Sforza 1986: 422). People similar to modern day Pygmies seem to have been hunting, fishing and gathering in the expanded rain forest areas of central Africa between 9,000 BP and 5,000 BP, prior to the advent of any form of agriculture (Bailey, Head, Jenike, Owen, Rechtman & Zechenter 1989: 67).

Welsh journalist and explorer, Henry Morton Stanley, on his way to Lake Mwitanzige through the Ituri forest, encountered 'undersized nomads, dwarfs, Pygmies who live in unclear virgin forest and support themselves on game' (Stanley 1890: 218, 225, 362-65). For Stanley, there were 'two species of Pygmies,': one, the Batwa with longish heads, long narrow faces, reddish skin; and the other, the utterly dissimilar Bambuti with round faces, gazelle-like eyes, open foreheads, of undisguised frankness, and skin of a rich, yellow, ivory complexion (Stanley 1890: 362-5). When Stanley encountered an Mbuti man and his wife, he remarked that:

[T]he pair was undoubtedly man and woman. In him was a mimicked dignity, as of Adam; in her the womanliness of a miniature Eve (Stanley 1890: 44).

The earliest reference to Pygmies in Uganda was by British botanist, explorer and colonial administrator, Sir Harry Johnston (Johnston 1902: 473, 479-80). Yet, Raper and Ladkin (1951) argued that Pygmy people do not exist in Uganda, and that the 1950s tradition among the Baganda of a Pygmy tribe called the Banakalanga is circumstantial and highly exaggerated. According to Raper and Ladkin, the Banakalanga were sufferers of cachectic infantilism (Raper & Ladkin 1951: 157). However, geneticist Cavalli-Sforza points out that Pygmy people do

exist and that their conservative body parts and small stature are probably genetically determined (Cavalli-Sforza 1986: 395-402).

Ruth Fisher's account from the early 1900s, describes the people in Uganda as "barbarous races, abject savages, including Pygmies and cannibals, naked folk with painted faces and limbs" (Fisher 1970: 2-6). According to Fisher, specific traits of Pygmy types were markedly found among populations near Lake Stephanie in Ethiopia, and in Uganda, on the north and western slopes of Mount Elgon, Mbale and Kyagwe forest, Mukono.

These primary accounts echo early anthropologists' fascination with Pygmies as being primitive, backward and isolated beings (see Johnston 1920), often described using non-human images (Grinker 1994: 105) such as 'gazelle-like eyes' (Stanley 1890: 362-365). By the beginning of the 1960s, notions of Pygmies as being uncivilised, sequestered beings who lived beyond the reaches of foreign powers were extremely popular around the world (Headland & Reid 1989: 43). Modern Pygmy communities were portrayed as windows to the Stone Age, living fossils of a primitive past (Dentan 1988). In his communication to the Royal Anthropological Institute, Turnbull argued that the Mbuti should be considered as living in an idyllic environment, in political, social, economic **isolation** from the rest of Africa:

surrounded by strong cultural influences ... the Bambuti preserve a way of life and thought that is essentially their own (Turnbull 1955: 23; 1959: 45).

This isolation model became heavily criticised and, by the late 1980s and early 1990s. Debate questioned whether humans are capable of living exclusively by foraging wild plants of the rain forest, as the Pygmies are portrayed, or whether some form of symbiosis with farmers was necessary for Pygmy adaptation (Bailey, *et al.* 1989; Bahuchet, McKey & de Garine 1991). Thomas Headland and Lawrence Reid (1989) argued that hunter-gatherers were **never** independent or isolated, but rather, had **always** interacted with farmers through trade and exchange. The simple food production observed among Pygmies today is neither

recent nor anomalous but represents an economy practised by most Pygmy groups in a relatively symbiotic, interdependent relationship for at least several hundred years (Headland & Reid 1989: 59-60) or more (Bahuchet & Guillaume 1982; Hart & Hart 1986; Terashima 1998: 123). For Headland and Reid, Pygmies lived in interdependence with, rather than independent of, surrounding societies and they continue to exist not **in spite of** but **because of** their contacts with the outside world (Headland & Reid 1989:59-60). This later position has strong nuances in common with that argued earlier by Schebesta (1933: 214-5) and Turnbull (1961; 1965c; 1997).

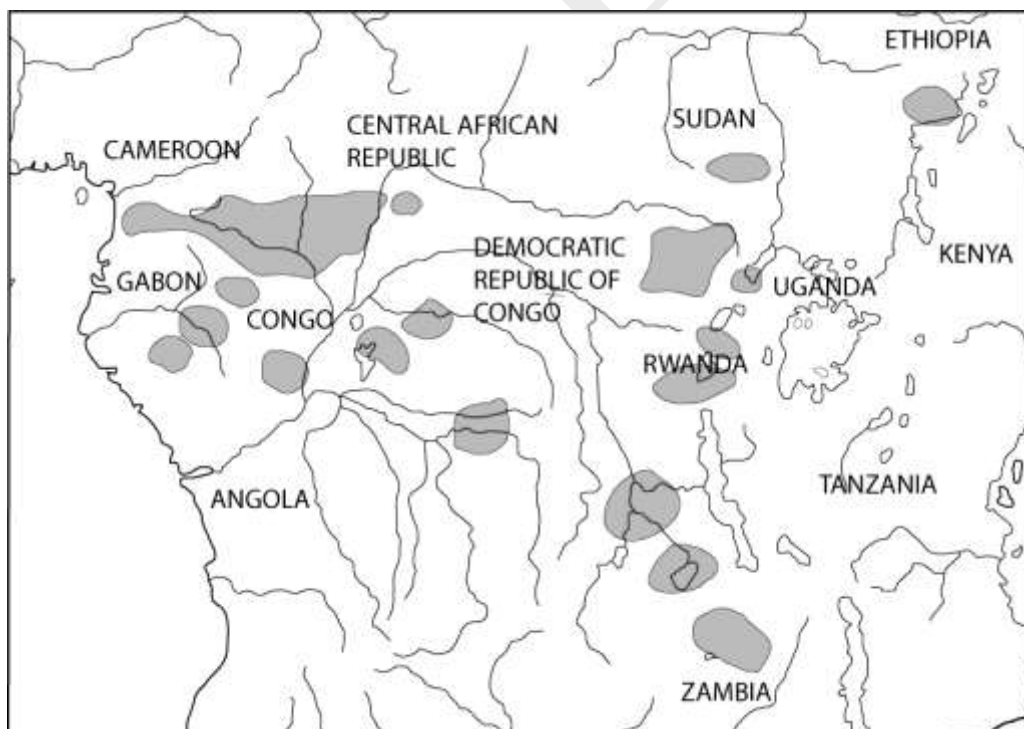
Ethnographic, archaeological, linguistic, genetic evidence, oral history and historic accounts indicate that mutually beneficial rather than exploitative, hunter-farmer symbiotic relations have been in existence for a long time (see Turnbull 1997: 224-6; 1986: 104). Current understandings now show that the wild foods necessary for survival can be found in the tropical rain forests, but that the Pygmies choose also to eat farm produce (Sato 2001: 132; Lewis 2002: 33; Mercader 2002: 123). The universality of relationships over all Pygmy groups and the influences this has had on some farmer groups indicates long-term Pygmy-farmer relations (Cavalli-Sforza 1986: 362).

In summary, after several years of debate on Pygmies, old racist derogatory perceptions of them persist amongst a small percentage of all groups – farmers, researchers and government representatives. These perceptions probably emerge from a hesitation to admit any association or identification with people who were, and still are, despised. Lewis (2002) has argued that the continued notion of Pygmy culture and nomadic existence, as being in the process of degenerating under pressure from external influences, encourages the use of the term ‘Pygmy’ as a form of ethnic identity of Pygmies (Lewis 2002: 47).

The term ‘Pygmy’ is widely used by non-Pygmy people to refer to them (often in a derogatory way), but only rarely by Pygmies themselves. For example, most ordinary Batwa of the Great Lakes region do not like the term because they only

hear it in the context of verbal abuse from neighbours, although Batwa political activists tend to approve of and use the term since it allows for collective debate and identity. There are many Pygmy groups in Africa, but those closest to Uganda are the Twa of Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika (Fig. 3), the Mbuti Aka, Sua and Efe of the Ituri Forest of eastern Congo (Turnbull 1965b: 159), some of whom remain in Uganda today (Fig. 4).

The question of the identity of the hunter-gatherers of East Africa has persisted amongst researchers due to reluctance in accepting that an authentic group of people, other than Bushmen, hunted, fished, gathered and traversed various parts of Africa north of the Zambezi. The anthropological evidence makes it likely that, regardless of various notions of them, the hunter-gatherers of Uganda were most likely Pygmy people.



(Image: After Cavalli Sforza 1986:24)

Figure 3: Distribution of Pygmy groups of Africa

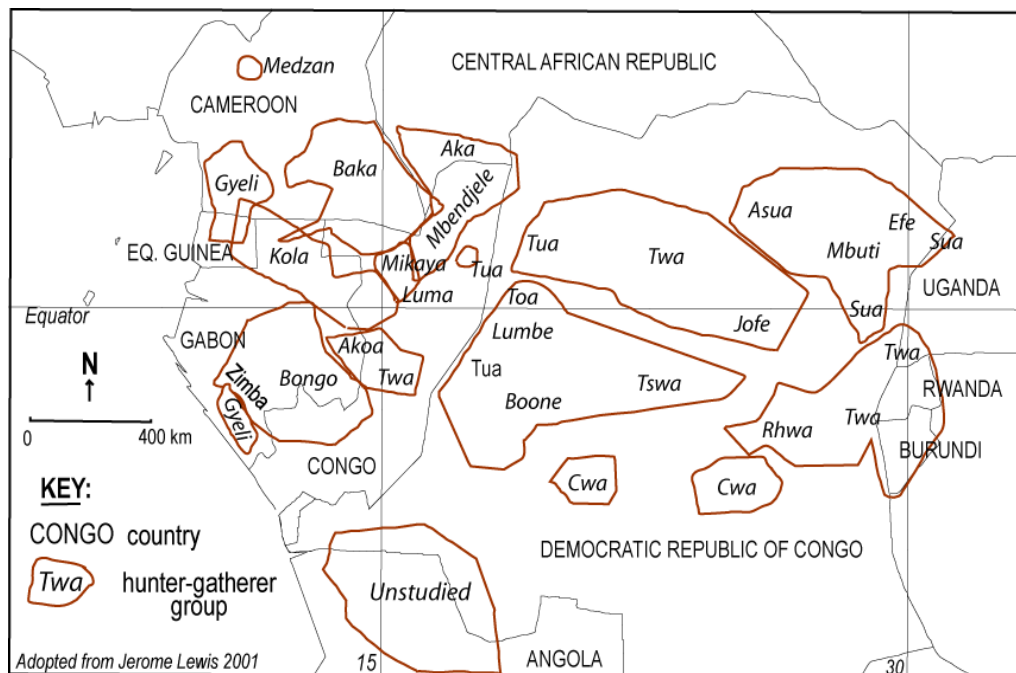


Figure 4: Distribution of Pygmy groups of Central Africa

Other Supporting Evidence

Archaeology

More archaeological evidence, genetic studies and oral tradition support the argument that the hunter-gatherers of Uganda were Pygmies. Researchers once suggested that LSA assemblages known as Wilton, spread from southern Africa to as far as East Africa, and by implication, Bushman populations lived as far north as East Africa. However, Deacon (1984) and later Wadley (2000; 2001b) cite a discontinuity in lithic industries between southern and central Africa, arguing that the Wilton Industry does not extend north of the Zambezi. Clark (1970) suggested an alternative forest-based technological complex throughout central Africa as far as the Congo Basin, which he called the Nachikufan Industries, arguing that people living in moist forests must have differed markedly in their way of life from those in the savannah (Clark 1970: 175). A scarcity of preserved bone makes it difficult to obtain an accurate record of the

basic economy of forest people, though knowledge of the present may provide a basis. Clark contended that heavy scrapers (such as those in the LSA assemblages of East Africa) suggest an extensive use of wood such as for making bark cloth (*ibid.*: 178).

In East Africa, indigenous populations from the later MSA through to the LSA are assumed to have been mainly Bushmanoid because of an assumed rough correlation between Bushmanoid people and makers of LSA lithics. Despite the tradition of burial rituals, completely well preserved skeletons of the LSA period are rare and, when found, are often fragmentary (Gramly & Rightmire 1973: 85; Phillipson 1993). Skeletal remains described as Proto-Bushmanoid with Negroid affinities and associated with LSA have been found in Eastern Rift Valley lakes and at Ishango, on the north-western shore of Lake Edward (Cole 1964: 247; Phillipson 1993: 115).

Whereas some sources suggest these features represent populations ancestral to present day Nilotes, others emphasise features seen in Bushmen, leading them to interpret the harpoon fishers of Lake Mwitanzige as akin to a common ancestor of several more recent populations (Rightmire 1975: 115; Phillipson 1993).

Excavations on Kansyore island, in the Kagera river, revealed typical LSA artefacts, large cores and a 'heavily used lump of red ochre', numerous freshwater oyster shells and an exceptionally small skeleton without a skull (Chapman 1967: 169). However, one cannot say that this skeleton is 'San' due to its small stature; it could just as easily be described as 'Pygmy'.

Genetics

Genetic studies now indicate that the African population is highly diverse, despite a perceived physical uniformity (in skin colour). Sub-Saharan physical types vary from one extreme (the Masai and Samburu known for their tall stature) to another (Pygmy people who are among the world's shortest adults). Given the levels of interaction and admixture between pastoralists, farmers and hunter-gatherers, it is difficult to determine a hunter-gatherer status based on physical uniformity. In

parts of East Africa, Lane, Ashley & Oteyo (2006: 135) suggest that the recent ceramic making hunter-gatherer communities of the northern Nyanza district of Kenya slowly and intermittently appropriated and adapted the trappings of a farming lifestyle. Although genetic data is largely restricted to living populations, it can tell us something about human history (Cavalli-Sforza 2001:33). The previously widely held assumption that in prehistoric times eastern and sub-Saharan Africa original population comprised a physical type allied to the San (Clark 1950a: 42; Murdock 1959: 44) has been disproved. Now, genetic evidence clearly shows that the San and the Pygmies are different (Knight, Underhill, Mortensen, Shivotovsky, Lin, Henn, Louis, Ruhlen & Mountain 2003: 2). Another group of people believed to share linguistic similarities with the San of southern Africa are the Hadza and Sandawe of Tanzania.

The Hadza (also known by the derogatory terms, of Hadzabe, Hadzapi, Hatsa, Tindiga, Watindiga, Kindiga, Kangeju, Western Hadza: Wahi) are a minority group of hunter-gatherers of the eastern rift valley of northern Tanzania. The Sandawe of the Tanzania central highlands, speak languages employing click consonants and are widely regarded as a relict population of former hunter-gatherers. Modern Sandawe spend time in the forest collecting honey, wild food and hunting small animals. Regardless of the contact the Hadza and Sandawe have had with non-foraging communities for over a century, they retain the trappings of a hunter-gatherer way of life.

Although the Hadza and Sandawe are believed to share linguistic similarities with the San of southern Africa, there is no evidence at present for a linguistic, cultural or physical tie supporting theories of early San or Caucasoid populations in East Africa (Woodburn 1970: 11; Schepartz 1988: 63). Woodburn suggests that the link between the Hadza and Sandawe is no closer and no more certain than that between the Bushmen and the Hadza (Woodburn 1970: 271). Although Bleek (1931: 281), Murdock (1959: 60), Schepartz (1988: 63), Ten Raa (1969), Woodburn (1962: 271) and Masao (1976: 59) show that the Hadza and Sandawe are linguistically close, speaking with consonants pronounced using a velaric

ingressive air stream, there is no evidence clearly linking Hadza and Sandawe languages to Khoisan (Blench 2006: 93). Blench's position is strengthened by modern genetic research (Knight, *et al.* 2003; Salas, *et al.* 2002) that now shows 100,000 years of separate development between the click-speaking San and the Hadza (which also holds true for the Sandawe).

According to Knight *et al.* (2003), the Hadza Y-chromosome haplogroup B2b and mtDNA haplogroup L2a1 indicate that the Hadza are genetically different from the San but closer to typical Pygmy groups like the Mbuti, although the Hadza and Mbuti are reduced in diversity in comparison to neighbouring groups. The original Hadza population was influenced by genetic admixture from Bantu populations. However, Hadza are genetically more distant from Bantu populations than they are from the Sandawe. The Sandawe, on the other hand, have an exceptionally small genetic distance from Central-Western Bantu speakers. The genetic distance between the Hadza and Sandawe is of the same magnitude as that between these groups and all other sub-Saharan populations (Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi & Piazza 1994: 177). Therefore, the Hadza are quite distinct from the Sandawe, and both are equally distinct from their neighbouring Bantu-speakers.

Studies of the African Y chromosome and mtDNA divergence show that the Hadza and the San are separated by genetic distance as great as or greater than any other pair of African populations (Knight, *et al.* 2003; Salas, *et al.* 2002). The genetic divergence suggests that alternatively, before *Homo sapiens sapiens* developed the capacity to produce sound, communication may have been by clicks produced by the teeth and the movement of the tongue. This suggests that clicks trace back to an early common ancestral language rather than a recent cultural trait (Knight, *et al.* 2003: 1, 8). Sandawe language is tentatively thought to be related to the Kwadi-Khoe family although there are insufficient known correlations for regular sound correspondences to be established (Blench 2006: 165, 171).

Genetically, Pygmy groups are extremely divergent from all other African populations (Jayakar & Cavalli-Sforza 1986: 330). Although African mtDNA studies indicate a 70,000 year deep common ancestry between ancestors of farming populations and Pygmies, a 30,000 year period of isolation accounts for phenotypic differences between them (Quintana-Murci, Quach, Harmant, Luca, Massonnet, Patin, Sica, Mouguiama-Daouda, Comas, Tzur, Balanovsky, Kidd, Kidd, van der Veen, Hombert, Gessain, Verdu, Froment, Bahuchet, Heyer, Dausset, Salas & Beharf 2008: 1596). From about 40,000 to a few thousand years ago, an asymmetrical maternal gene flow from Pygmies to ancestors of the farming populations began and continued with the Bantu expansion. Bahuchet (1992; 1993) argues that the reduction in the rain-forest at the end of the Pleistocene isolated Pygmy groups in relict forest. These groups diffused outwards when the forest began to expand again, eventually encountering the incoming Bantu farming populations.

Conclusively, there are four main genetic groups of hunter-gatherers in sub-Saharan Africa –Pygmies, San, Hadza and Sandawe. The San have no genetic links to any of these groups, while the Mbuti Pygmies, believed to be the most pure, are genetically closer to the Hadza. The Hadza and Sandawe on the other hand are not genetically distinct from other African populations. In modern Uganda, there are no descendants of the Hadza or Sandawe, whereas there are pockets of Pygmy descendent populations. It is therefore highly probable that Pygmy-like hunter-gatherers were present in Uganda.

Oral Tradition

Hunter-gatherer groups, described as exhibiting the trait, ‘pale-yellow skin’, are believed to have inhabited Uganda and other parts of East Africa. Among the Alur of Uganda for example, Aidan William Southall (1953) recorded oral traditions remembering the Pygmies as being of a “dwarf stature, yet of great ferocity and cunning, and as skilful hunters, especially of elephants. Alur called them *Jupunenakane* ‘The People of Where-did-you-see-me’ because when you met a pygmy, he always asked where he had been seen coming” (Southall 1953:

23). According to Southall, if you said, you had only just seen him he would attack you at once for mocking his stature, so you pointed to a distant hill and affirmed you had seen him over there (*ibid.*).

A similar oral tradition is told among the Makua of southern Tanzania (Conan-Davies 1944) and the Nyakusa of south-western Tanzania, who refer to Pygmy people as *Bansimpiningili* “where did you see me?” (Colson 1965: 567), in Zambia among the Lunda-Luba speakers and the Gwembe Tonga people who refer to Pygmies as the *Banasimpiningili* or *Mwandibonene* (Clark 1950a: 48; Colson 1965: 567), as well as among the Chêwa of central-southern Malawi where Pygmies are referred to as *amwandionerapati* ‘where did you see me?’ (Morris 2000: 209). The Gwembe Tonga make a distinction between Pygmies and Bushmen, referring to Bushmen as the *Makwengo* (Colson 1965: 568). This mixed, coherent oral tradition over a large area in East and Central Africa confirms that Clark’s Nachikufan people were present in Uganda and the broader landscape.

In sum, this evidence has thrown up three key points. First, the discontinuity in the Wilton industries between southern and central Africa, suggests that different groups of hunter-gatherers existed north and south of the Zambezi. Second, the Bushmen of southern Africa are genetically different from the Pygmies, and there is a strong genetic divergence between Bushmen, the Hadza and Sandawe. Third, a consistent thread of oral traditions relating to Pygmies within the east and central Africa forest zone weaves the archaeological and genetic evidence neatly together. In light of this evidence, I conclude that the diverse Pygmy groups of the Congo were once spread across East and Central Africa and were most probably the aboriginal inhabitants of this landscape. In Uganda, modern Batwa are descendants of these ancient aboriginal groups.

Modern Uganda has a population of about 31 million people (Uganda Bureau of Statistics July 2008 estimates), comprising several ethnic groupings with a perceived strong sense of culture and heritage. Ethnic conflicts and wars were,

and still are fought to defend land and in the process emphasise differences between ethnic groups. The perceived sense of cultural uniformity is threatened by current ethnic conflicts that persist in various parts of Uganda. Some of these conflicts are rooted in traditions with prehistoric roots.

By 1,000 BP the population of Uganda had undergone tremendous admixtures both socially and culturally because of interactions, for example intermarriages and migrations of Southern and Eastern Cushites, Bantu, Southern, Western and Eastern Nilotic-speakers that profoundly changed people's values and traditions in East Africa (Ambrose 1982; Schepartz 1988). In retrospect, from 100,000 BP until about 8,000 BP, there was a steady shift away from broad cultural uniformity as seen in the archaeological record, to regional traditions. There is a southern savannah zone, a central African forest zone and an east African savannah zone. Uganda is closely linked to the central African forest zone. Pygmy people were most probably the descendants of the makers of the microlithic traditions from 10,000 to 1,000 BP, and must have been the makers of the geometric rock art within this zone. The cultural sequence for Uganda is now well understood and relatively well dated. The only question now is how the rock art links to this sequence, and I will answer this question in chapters 2, 3 and 6.

Chapter Two

THE ROCK ART OF UGANDA

Fieldwork, Traditions, Distribution

In the contextual approach I have chosen, I consider the rock art of Uganda in the context of the archaeological record itself and try to place the rock art in its social and cognitive setting. Towards this end, in this chapter I provide an overview of rock art traditions in Africa, more specifically in east and central Africa. I then describe the rock art in Uganda and show the site distribution, taking cognisance of the various contexts in which the rock art is found.

Great strides have been made over the last 20 years towards understanding the rock art in southern and central Africa. A 'grey area' exists in East Africa particularly in Uganda where the few studies that exist, published between 1938 and 1974 (Wayland 1938; Lawrance 1953; Posnansky 1961; Morton 1967; Chaplin 1974)¹, are highly descriptive and largely speculative. Since the 1960s, no major research has been conducted in Uganda to extend these studies. To date, Uganda has no research institutions outside the Uganda Museum concerned with rock art research, and aside from the Uganda Journal, there is no academic forum for debate on rock art research or conservation.

Although descriptive and speculative interpretations of rock art were common to almost all rock art research prior to the 1970s, research in East Africa was dogged by the assumption that the rock art of the region should be attributed to

¹ In his 1953 publication, J.C.D. Lawrance is spelt 'Lawrence'. In 1955 and 1958 publications, Lawrance is spelt as 'Lawrance'. Although there is no apology from the editor regarding the error in spelling of the name 'Lawrance' and given the fact that all of his subsequent publications use the spelling Lawrance means that this must be the correct spelling. In this thesis, I have adopted the spelling 'Lawrance' even for the 1953 publication.

“Bushmen”. This assumption led to the use in East Africa of explanations derived from southern Africa (Lawrance 1955a: 10; 1957: 6; Posnansky 1961: 107; Leakey 1983: 15) and I believe this was an erroneous analogy.

Researchers used the assumption that the primary inhabitants of East Africa were ‘Bushman-like’ to conclude that the hunter-gatherers of sub-Saharan Africa were of a single cultural group and similar everywhere. A few researchers argued that human remains from the Lake Turkana Galana Boi Beds in Kenya represented tall, Late Pleistocene eastern Africans present in the landscape as long ago as 10,000 BP (Rightmire 1984; Schepartz 1988: 67). Despite this, the majority of rock art researchers assumed there would be commonalities between the rock art of East Africa and that of the better-known southern regions of Africa, particularly South Africa. As I have discussed in the previous section, recent genetic studies reveal just how flawed this assumption was: modern East African hunter-gatherers are separated from the southern African Bushmen by a genetic distance far greater than any other pair of African populations (Cavalli Sforza 1986; Knight *et al.* 2003: 1).

Situating Uganda within the rock art traditions of Africa

This study is not the first foray into rock art research in Uganda. The human facility for symbolic communication, realised in such forms as rock art, has intrigued the minds of archaeologists before me. These archaeologists focused first on questions of chronology and typologies, only very rarely tackling the more slippery issues of attribution, interpretation and understanding of rock art. Rock art, like other archaeological remains, occurs in many regions of the world. One way to approach understanding of rock art then, is to consider the regional contexts.

A Regional Context of the rock art of Uganda

Willcox (1984) divided the hunter-gatherer rock art of Africa into three regions with sub regions namely: the Maghreb and the Sahara with a sub region relating to the horn of Africa, the Central African Art Zone with the central Tanzanian sub-region and the Southern African Art Zone with six sub-regions of southern Africa. The earliest known rock art in the Sahara, tentatively attributed to hunter-gatherers, is dominated by figurative depictions of animal and human forms. Extensive research in this region has generated a compilation of styles and a development of chronologies rather than an attempt to interpret the rock art.

Focusing on central and southern Africa, Smith (1997) expands some of Willcox's categories and identifies four broad regional rock art distinctions that include hunter-gatherer and other traditions, namely:

1. the hunter-gatherer tradition of the Bushmen of southern Africa, termed the 'Southern African "Bushman" Art Zone';
2. the 'hunter-gatherer' tradition of central Tanzania, termed the 'East African "Sandawe" Art Zone';
3. the hunter-gatherer tradition of Zambia, Malawi, northern Mozambique, eastern Angola, southeast Democratic Republic of Congo, and south and western Tanzania termed the 'Central African "Twa" Art Zone';
4. the rock art traditions of the Bantu-speakers, and areas with geometrics of unknown associations (Smith 1997: 22-26) which include Uganda and the Central African Republic.

Within the category of geometrics in central and southern Africa there are three known rock art traditions: that of the Bantu-speakers, colloquially referred to as 'late-whites' because it often occurs over other rock art traditions; the rock art of herders; and the red geometric tradition linked to Pygmies. The rock art of Bantu-speakers or Iron Age farmer rock art consists mainly of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic imagery, animal forms, and images of people, spread-eagled designs and geometric images. No attempt is made to capture the true likeness of the figurative object and attention to detail is impossible. The pigment is usually a

rough chalky white paste although red, orange and black monochrome pigment has been recorded (Namono 2004: 24). Herder rock art comprises geometrics depicted in finger-painted red and white monochrome pigment and is attributed to Khoekhoen herders of southern Africa (Smith & Ouzman 2004). In this thesis, I will not focus on herder or farmer rock art in detail.

The majority of geometrics linked to Pygmies are similar to those described for sites in Uganda, in central and north-central Tanzania (Mabulla 2005: 36-7), in the lake Victoria Basin (Chaplin 1974) and Zambia and Malawi (Smith 1995, 1997). I am aware that within the Pygmy geometric rock art tradition, regional variations can and probably do exist. However, congruency in subject matter, pigment and a stylised manner of depiction suggest an association in tradition. Such association has been the subject of past understandings of geometric rock art in east and central Africa.

Past understandings of geometric rock art in East and Central Africa

Drawing on Clark (1950a; 1958) and Chaplin (1959), Willcox (1984) described the 'Central African Art zone' as running "...from Uganda southwards to the Zambezi and from there to Angola, and eastwards into northern Mozambique..." (Willcox 1984: 80). Willcox noted that Chaplin attributed the geometric motifs in this zone to "...the Butwa, a dancing cult whose practices seem to have taken over from a Negroid people preceding the present Bantu-speakers in the region" (*ibid*). Willcox suggested that the Oropom, or an offshoot of theirs, were the most likely makers of some of the rock art in north-eastern Uganda (Willcox 1984: 94).

Among the minority, Clarence van Riet Lowe (1937) argued that, in Zambia, only the animal paintings were made by Bushmen and that all the geometric rock art of the region was not typical of southern African Bushmen paintings. This argument is sustained by Desmond Clark's later archaeological finds at Nachikufu in Zambia (Clark 1950b). The Nachikufan human skeletal material confirms that the inhabitants of rock art areas "are not typically Bush, but belong to more robust types (Clark 1950a: 42). Clark used stone tool evidence to argue for a forest-

based technological complex throughout central Africa (Clark 1950b; 1970). Using stone tool typological parallels, Clark suggested a possible link between the later hunter-gatherers of Zambia and those of Angola, northern and central Malawi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the equatorial region of the Congo Basin (Clark 1950a: 43-5). He then went on to link this to a rock art tradition.

In the late 1950s, Clark (1958) made initial recognition of a rock art tradition when he described a concentration of rock art sites in south central and east Africa as far as eastern Uganda, the Nyasa and Tete provinces of Mozambique, southern Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi, eastern Katanga province of the Democratic Republic of Congo and eastern Angola as the 'Central African Schematic Art Group', which he later termed the 'Schematic Rock Art Zone' (Clark 1959). The schematic zone was characterised by a predominance of red monochrome geometric grids and circular shaped motifs. Clark postulated that schematic art originated from the equatorial regions of Africa and derived from a working knowledge of a softer medium such as bark cloth. He added that alternatively, it could be that the tradition arose from hunter-gatherer contact with western elements (Clark 1958: 74). Regardless of this problematic statement, Clark had acknowledged the important link between rock art and cultural practice.

Based on archaeological excavations from areas in Malawi and Zambia, Clark argued that the presence of LSA and Iron Age material was evidence of two groups of people living alongside each other. He suggested that hunter-gatherers might have acquired the art of working metal from immigrant, food producing metalworking farmers with whom they came into contact (Clark 1959: 211). Clark further argued that descendents of the hunter-gatherers, 'Batwa' were represented along the northern Zambian border and were living in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Clark 1959: 211; Smith & Blundell in prep.). Therefore, Clark implied a possible identification of the makers of the Schematic Art Group as being Batwa hunter-gatherers.

Anati (1986), Chaplin (1974), Garlake (1995), Leakey (1983), Posnansky and Nelson (1968), Smith (1997) and Mabulla (2005: 37) subsequently acknowledge that a red geometric tradition is evident from Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo, northern Tanzania, Uganda to western Kenya. Smith (1997) followed Clark and linked the red geometric tradition of this region, to Batwa hunter-gatherers.

Rock art researchers in Malawi and Zambia (e.g. Lindgren & Schoffeleers 1985; Juwayeyi & Phiri 1992) identified new patterns in the paintings, (i.e. white & red schematic, red animal) but this identification has not aided in explaining the meaning of the paintings. Current understanding draws from Smith's doctoral research in Zambia and Malawi, and subsequent analysis of the rock art of Central Africa (Smith 1995, 1997). Smith (1995; 1997; 2001) divides the rock art of south-central Africa into four traditions: white zoomorphic, white spread-eagled, red animal and red geometric. In his analysis, Smith contends that farmer groups made the white spread-eagled and white zoomorphic paintings (Smith 1997: 13). He also argues that the tradition comprising red animals and the other, of red geometric paintings, belong to Batwa hunter-gatherers (Smith 1997: 12-13).

Within the landscape, Smith argues, the Batwa hunter-gatherer tradition is widespread and found in greatest concentration in areas unsuitable for agriculture, and, where oral traditions record a presence of Pygmy groups (Smith 1997:17, 28). On the other hand, Smith notes, farmer rock art is localised. Smith's understandings enhance this study. The formal similarities in the rock art suggest a possible cultural link between the makers of the rock paintings in Zambia and Malawi and those in Uganda. In East Africa, six rock art traditions have now been identified:

1. *Farmer rock art*

In Tanzania, this rock art tradition is associated with the Warangi of Tanzania based on its pattern of distribution and oral traditions. In Kenya, Kajaido district,

at a place Osaga Odak recorded as Namangatives rock shelter (Odak 1988: 76), there are rock paintings that bear strong similarities with farmer rock art (Fig. 5). I suggest that this rock art may be aligned to the Bantu-speaking farmers of south-central Kenya. In Uganda, evidence of farmer rock art has not yet been documented.



Central Tanzania (Image: RARI 2003)



South-central Kenya (Image: Adopted from Odak 1988)

Figure 5: Examples of Farmer rock art in East Africa

2. Pastoralist rock art

In East Africa, a few pastoralist groups developed rock art traditions that occur at a few sites and are much localized. There are three categories of rock art (Fig. 6) attributed to pastoralists, namely:

- the figurative painted and engraved images of highly stylized depictions of long and short-horned cattle in Ethiopia and Kenya;
- the finger-painted images of stylized cattle around the shores of Lake Victoria in northern Tanzania. These cattle depictions and engraved board games, are tentatively attributed to Nilotic-speaking pastoralists; and

- depictions of cattle brands and shields associated with meat feasting and attributed to Ma'a speaking Samburu, Pokot, Turkana, and Masai of central Kenya and northern Tanzania. This association is made through a demonstrated link between the art and the ceremonial meat-feasting practices of the warriors from these groups. Chamberlain (2006: 156) suggests the rock art may have been painted in the context of initiation.

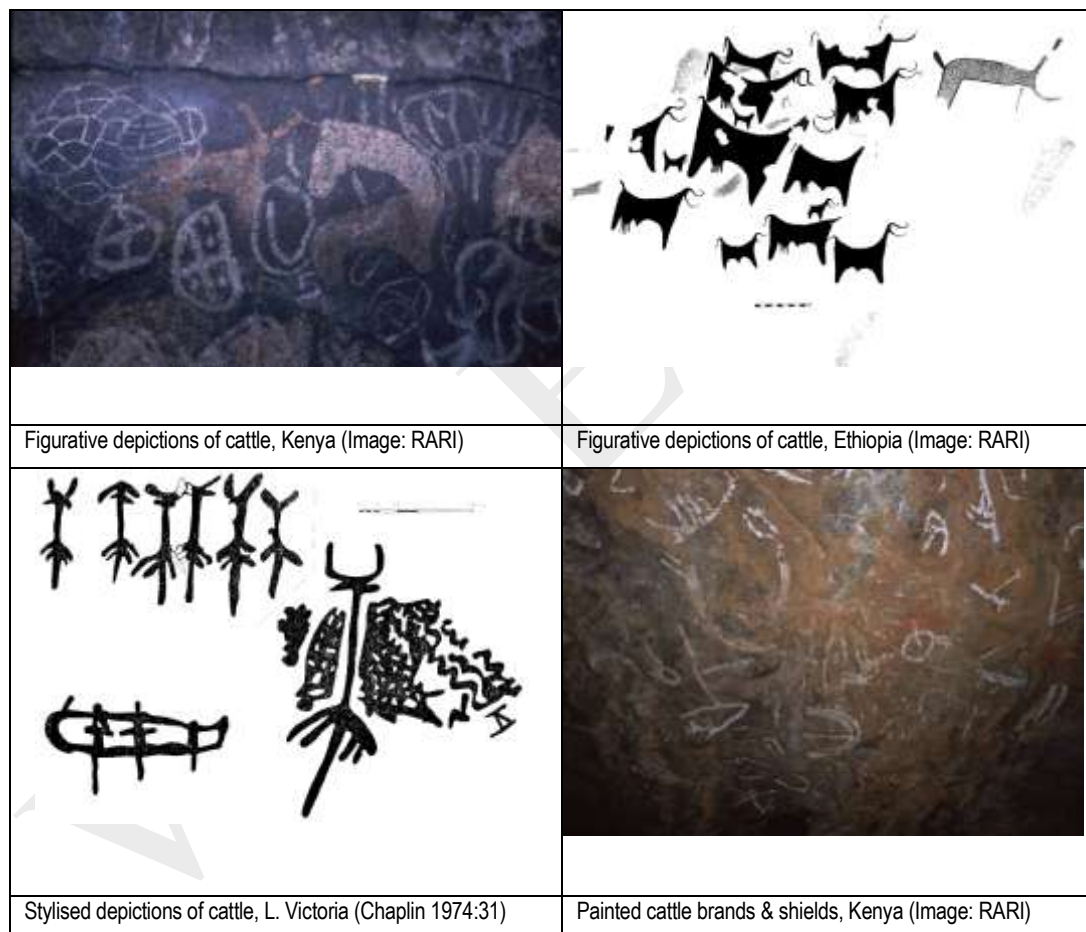


Figure 6: Examples of Pastoralist rock art in East Africa

Engravings that may be associated with pastoralists have been found in northern, central and western Uganda (e.g. Morton 1967; White & Nkurunziza 1971: 175-80), and northeastern Kenya (Soper 1968), however, none of the present local inhabitants know anything about them. In Kenya, Lynch and

Donahue (1980) suggested an erroneous attribution of ‘fresh’ paintings of north western Kenya, (Namoratunga) to Eastern Cushitic-speaking pastoralists who entered East Africa around 2,300 BP. Lynch and Donahue’s view was based on fragile and faulty data. It was subsequently reappraised by Soper (1982) and dismissed.

3. Hadza and Sandawe hunter-gatherers

The fine-line rock art of central Tanzania in Kondoa and Singida and north-central Tanzania in the Eyasi Basin tentatively attributed to hunter-gatherers believed to be ancestral to the Sandawe of the Irangi hills (Fig. 7). The localised distribution of this rock art closely corresponds to the known distribution of the Sandawe people who appear to have a hunter-gatherer ancestry that extends beyond the arrival of Bantu-speaking farmers to the area. This tradition is composed entirely of animal and human forms. A unique feature is the distinctive human head forms that distinguish it from the rock art of hunter-gatherers of other regions. This tradition is not found in Uganda.

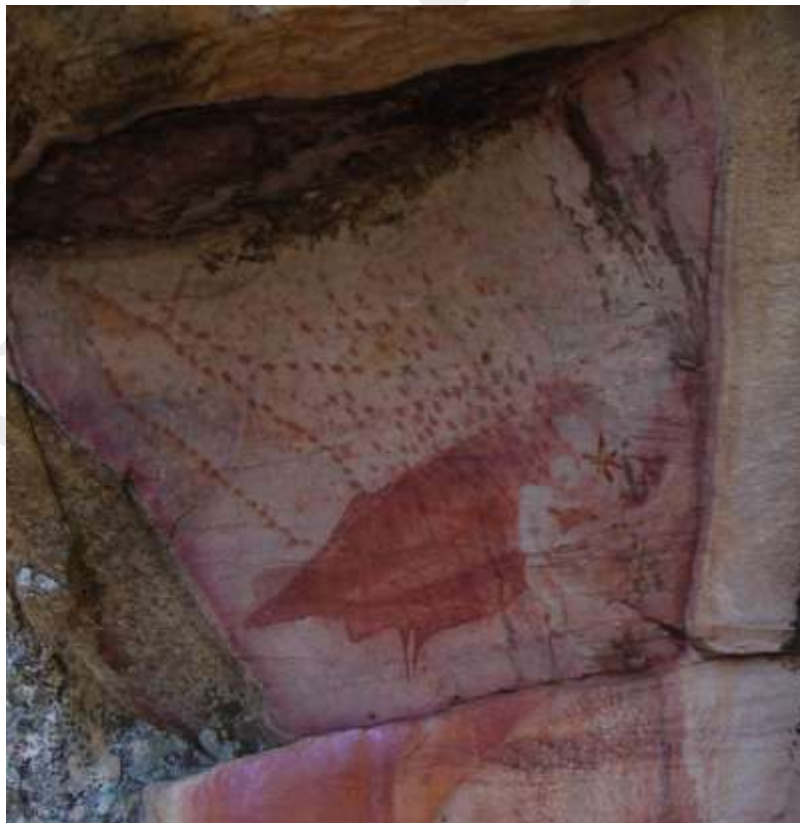


North-central Tanzania (Image: RARI 1999)

Figure 7: An example of Sandawe rock art

4. Pygmy hunter-gatherer rock art

A hunter-gatherer rock art tradition of Uganda, western Kenya, areas in the south, northern and western Tanzania, eastern Angola and southeast Democratic Republic of Congo, is the geometric or schematic rock art attributed to the BaTwa. As I mentioned earlier, Smith (1995, 1997) divided this tradition into two: the red animal tradition that comprises animal depictions in red pigment applied to the rock-face in fine-line brush strokes. Some of the animals are executed in remarkable naturalism but most are depicted with gross distortions in body form making it difficult to discern the species of the animal. Most of these animal depictions are associated with rows of dots that overlie the animal forms (Fig. 8) (Smith 1997:32). This tradition is predominately found painted in Kasama, Zambia although there is also evidence of engravings in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



(Image: Zubieta 2007)

Figure 8: An example of the red animal tradition, Kasama, Zambia

Second, the red geometric tradition comprises images depicted in red pigment usually applied by fingertip, sometimes applied by brush. The most common images are sets of parallel vertical lines, dots and circle variants (Smith 1997:41) (Fig. 9). This geomrtic rock art tradition is at the heart of this thesis.



(Image: Zubieta 2007)

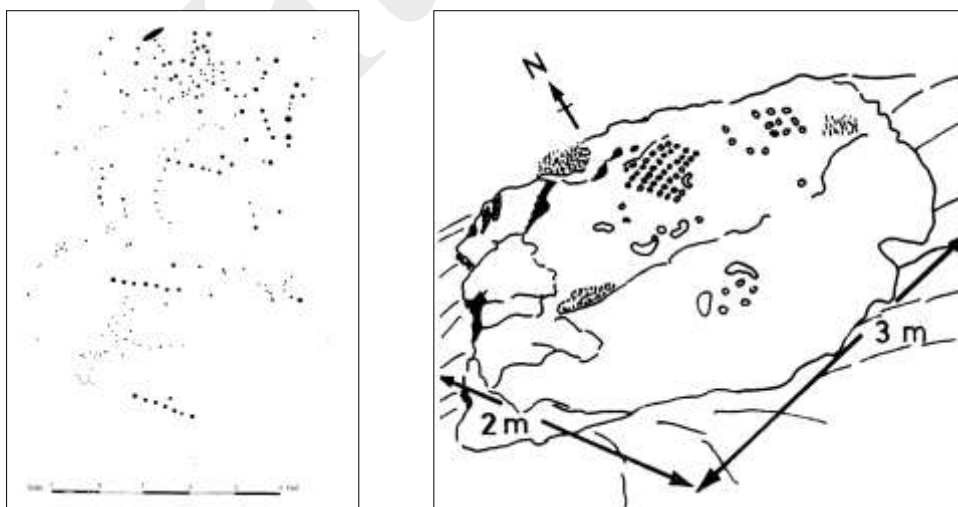
Figure 9: An example of the red geometric tradition, Kasama, Zambia

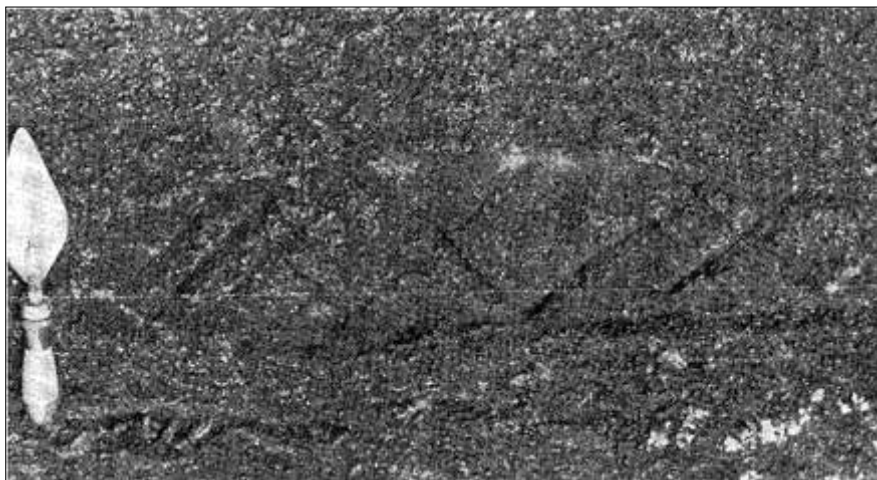
In light of major population migrations into and out of East Africa, researchers commonly debate the relationships between the archaeological record and the various population groups. The majority of researchers have focused on understanding pottery, stone and iron tools. Very few examined rock art within the same context, or read the rock art together with the archaeological data. In

attempting to understand any rock art, we often begin with description, which is, in effect, a form of interpretation. People describe images differently and often interpret images in multiple ways. Although early descriptive reports on rock art in Uganda may not satisfy modern scholars, they are useful in forming a basis for further rock art research. I describe the rock art of Uganda within the categories: engravings and paintings.

Engravings

In Uganda, rock engravings, sometimes called petroglyphs, are commonly found in the form of small-aligned cupules locally referred to as *omweso* because of the similarities in alignment between cupules and the holes on a traditional board game. These types of engravings are predominately found on top of hills or on large rocky slabs near water sources. Engravings have not been found on vertical rock faces or in rock shelters. At Nsongezi engravings were described as prehistoric inscriptions, small aligned cupules or as a series of engraved hollows in curved and straight lines (Wayland 1938; Pearce & Posnansky 1963; Chaplin 1974: 24). White and Nkurunziza describe six sites with *omweso* boards (White & Nkurunziza 1971: 175) (Fig. 10).





Kibengo (Image: after Lanning 1960)

Figure 11: Criss-crossed engraved marks

On a granite slab at Kibengo, Lanning (1960: 191) describes criss-crossed rock marks forming surface depressions. Lanning suggests that these depressions appear not to have occurred by chance and it is probable that their significance may be diagnostic of spear heads or blades wrapped in stripes of hide, bark cloth, dried leaves or banana fibre that may have been a sign of peace or a warning (Lanning 1960:191). Archaeological evidence from the occupation sites at Kibengo shows that a pastoral people occupied the area (*ibid.*: 195). It is probable that these pastoral people made the surface depressions (Fig. 11). Chaplin and McFarlane (1967: 207) described aligned grooves that were probably not used for grinding, hollows and small, aligned cupules on Moniko hill (Fig. 12). Andrew Reid recorded similar engravings at Kimera and Namagolola (Reid, pers. comm. 2007) (Fig. 13).



(Images: Namono 2006)

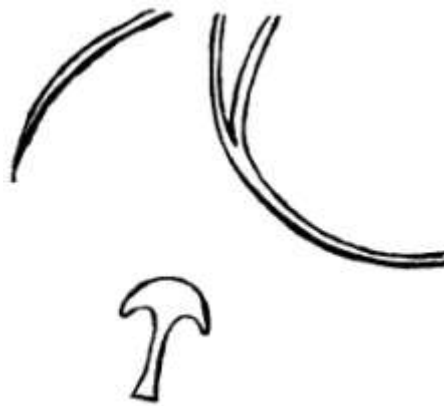
Figure 12: Engravings on Moniko hill



(Images: Reid 2002 & 2001 respectively)

Figure 13: Engravings at Kimera and Namagolola

At Hanfuka (Fig. 14), groove marks were described as weathered outlines of a ‘dozen hoes of pre-European type and two unidentified impressions’ (Lanning 1956; Chaplin & McFarlane 1967: 207; Chaplin 1974: 8). Lolui islands has images on a singular, ovate-shaped boulder, that were described as pecked designs of barred circles comprising an omweso board on top of the high boulder (Jackson, *et al.* 1965: 40) (Fig. 15). Chaplin described the engraving as a ‘rayed’ wheel with round and rectangular gridiron patterns (Chaplin 1974: 17).



(Image: Lanning 1956: 108)

Figure 14: Engravings at Hanfuka



(Image: Posnansky 1961)





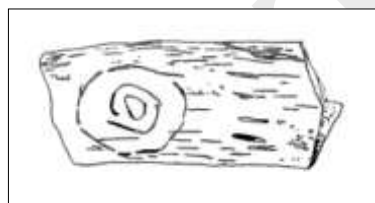
Lolui Islands & Sanzi Peninsula (Images: Namono 2006 & Reid 2002)

Figure 16: Examples of grinding hollows

In Figure 16, the top row shows images of grinding hollows around a rock art site; middle row, images of hollows on top of large boulder and bottom row, grinding hollows at the edge of the shore and surrounding areas of Lolui. On Lolui, oval to square grinding hollows have been found in very large numbers, sometimes up to 100 or more per outcrop, and sometimes very high up on boulders (Posnansky, *et al.* 2005: 94-95). Similar engravings are found around

some rock art sites, high on top of boulders and at several boat landing sites around the shores of Lake Victoria.

A bone with incisions of three concentric circles and four parallel vertical incisions, as well as two large orange-red pieces of prepared ochre recovered from excavations at Nyero 2 in 1945, are the first and only evidence to date of art mobilier in Uganda (Posnansky 1961: 110; Posnansky & Nelson 1968: 156) (Fig. 17). Whether the bone and ochre were used and therefore found in a rain-control context or as accumulated deposit is not very clear. The absence of context in this case makes it difficult to draw associations between the bone in Nyero, the parietal rock painting at the same site, and the loose block with a concentric circle at Loteteleit (Fig. 18).



(Image: after Posnansky 1961:108)

Figure 17: Engraved bone from Nyero



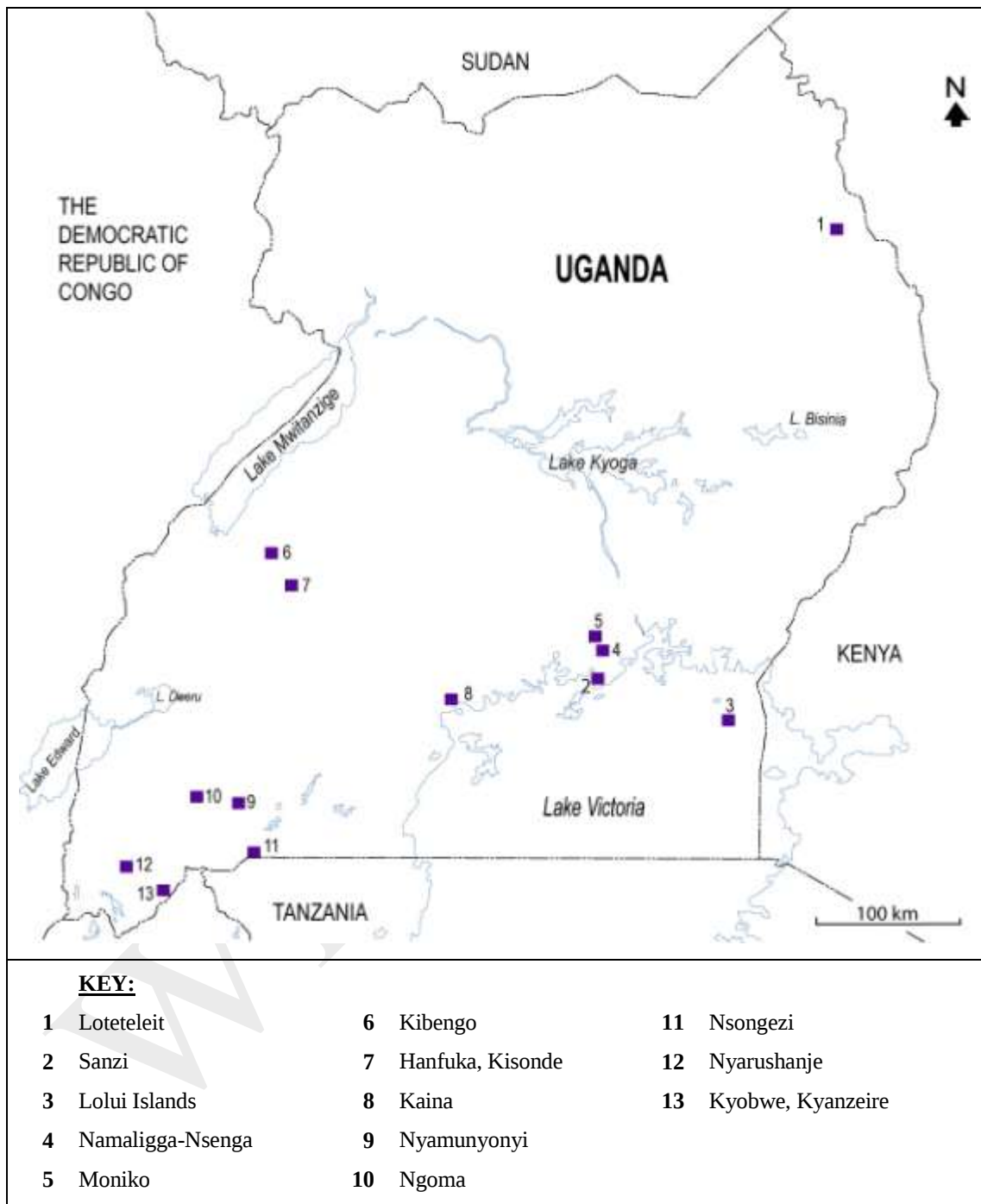


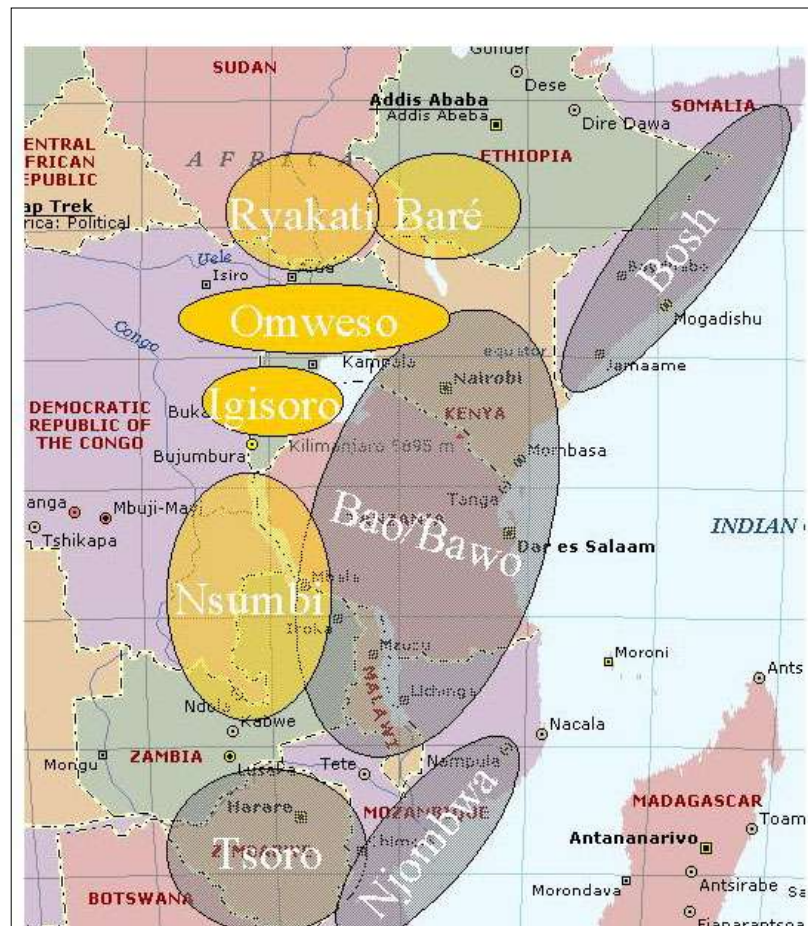
Figure 19: Distribution of documented engraved sites

It is now clear that these are three image classes of engravings (Fig. 19), namely, *omweso* boards, engravings associated with grinding technology and geometric imagery.

1. *Omweso boards:*

The first published reference to rock art in Uganda was in 1938 by Wayland, who described hieroglyphic ‘inscriptions’ as an interpretable assemblage of small aligned cup-holes suggestive of a miniature *omweso* board (Wayland 1938: 252). *Mweso* or *bao*, or some variation of these two names is the version of *mankala* played in East Africa. *Omweso*, sometimes shortened to *mweso*, is a board *mankala* introduced to Africa with the Indian Ocean trade. *Mankala* is of great antiquity in the Middle East and Egypt. The board game has evolved, with variants. According to Zaslavsky, (1973: 118) the two-row board (two by seven rows, two by six rows, two by eight rows with two cavities at the end) is used almost universally north of the equator, while south of the equator, the four-row version is generally preferred (Fig. 20).

In Uganda, the four by eight boards are the most commonly used. Originally, small-aligned grooves or cupules or a series of engraved hollows in curved and straight lines, pecked designs of barred circles, incised lines, and oval to square grinding hollows were etched into a rock slab. At Namaligga-Nsenga village in Mukono district, the locals believe that ancient people made the numerous *omweso* boards on top of the hills. The name of the village, ‘Namaligga’ means ‘place of many sheep’ and the oral traditions speak of pastoralists, keepers of large flock of sheep in the area. Engraved *omweso* boards are predominant in central and southern Uganda.



(Image: Wernham 2002: 6)

Figure 20: Geographical relationship of omweso to mancala variants in eastern and south-central Africa

2. Grinding technology

Engravings associated with grinding technology are commonly found on Lolui Island and near Sanzi on the Bukunja peninsula (Reid 2004, cited in Posnansky *et al.* 2005: 95) and areas in and around Lake Victoria. Posnansky, Reid and Ashley (2005: 95) suggest that grinding hollows are a less common feature in East Africa than in western Africa dating from the ‘Neolithic’ period to the present (*ibid.*). Posnansky, Reid and Ashley also suggest that these shapes were made in the act of grinding millet or cereals, and before grinding commenced, the surface was demarcated and pecked to guide the grinder. Oral traditions indicate that the grinding hollows are associated with recent migrant groups (*ibid.*).

3. Geometric tradition

Compared to the above categories, engravings within the geometric tradition occur in and around Lake Victoria and northeastern Uganda. Such engravings comprise concentric circles, grids, concentric circles with internal radiating spokes, lines and dots.

It is possible that there are other engraving sites in Uganda with another, as yet unidentified category of imagery. In Uganda, fewer engravings than paintings have been documented. This disparity may reflect a research bias towards paintings rather than engravings.

Paintings

Fifteen years after Wayland's publication on engravings, a series of publications by Lawrance (1953, 1958) described rock paintings in eastern Uganda as generally geometric. Archaeological evidence from north-eastern Uganda indicates a long period of occupation by hunter-gatherers and the probability that the cave dwellers were the makers of the rock paintings (Lawrance 1953: 12). Present day north-eastern inhabitants have no knowledge of the origins of the paintings. Tales abound of 'Europeans' with 'tails', small, light, pale-skinned frightened men, who skulked and were seldom seen. Oral traditions attest that these light-skinned men of short stature, a strange, dwarf race lived amongst the rocky inselbergs in Achuloi, Asuret and Nyero 200 or 300 years ago before the arrival of the present inhabitants (Cole 1964; Lawrance 1953: 12-13; 1955b: 90; 1957; 1958; Posnansky 1961; Posnansky & Nelson 1968). Drawing on Clark (1950b), Lawrance linked the makers of the 'carelessly finger-painted white geometric designs of concent

In Uganda, the Nyero rock paintings, Patiko Fort, the archaeological sites of Munsa, Mubende Hill, Bigo, and Ntusi, as well as Bweyore traditional palace are the only sites out of almost 200 known archaeological and historic sites in Uganda gazetted for protection. Perhaps due to their visual appeal, the rock paintings at Nyero are the best known of these sites and the most described rock painting sites in Uganda. Previously, three sites at Nyero hill were recorded and named Nyero 1, 2 and 3. Nyero 2, popularly referred to as the 'main site' is regarded by locals as a 'shrine' (Lawrance 1953; Posnansky & Nelson 1968: 148; Chaplin 1974: 34). It was first documented in the Teso Report of 1913 (Chaplin 1974: 27), mentioned in a 1945 report by C.A.E. Harwich and Pearson (Pearson 1945; Chaplin 1974: 27) and also described in detail by Lawrance (1953: 10-11).

The panel at Nyero 2 consists of images such as vertical divided sausage shapes, so called 'canoes', unidentified faint markings, many concentric circle shapes, 'U' shapes, lines and dots, with evidence of superimposition (Harwich 1961: 132; Lawrance 1953: 10-11; Posnansky & Nelson 1968: 151; Sassoon 1973: 8; Chaplin 1974: 28). Lawrance suggests rather unconvincingly that some linear images represent humans (Lawrance 1953: 10-11). Harwich added to this unconvincing suggestion by identifying hands and fingers (Harwich 1961: 132). Harwich (1961) obviously interpreted some images as 'a very stylistic impression of a man dragging an animal or possibly another man by the neck' (Harwich



(Image: RARI 2003)

Figure 21: Nyero 2 rock paintings



(Redrawn by Namono 2006)

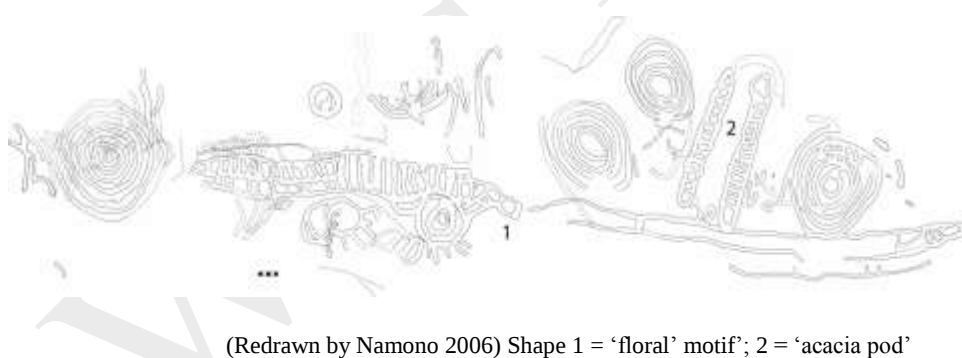


(Image: RARI 2003)

Figure 22: Examples of canoe shapes at Nyero 2

For Posnansky, Nelson and Chaplin, a unique feature of the paintings was the depiction of the so called ‘canoes’ or parts of ‘canoes’, some angular, others more rounded, with stylised representations of people and goods (Posnansky & Nelson 1968: 151, 154; Chaplin 1974: 28)(Fig. 22). Sassoon (1973: 8) erroneously described some extremely faded red lines as a frieze of zebra, painted in naturalistic and detailed style. Posnansky also made a similar error by suggesting that there were some very faint naturalistic paintings of zebra (Chaplin 1974: 27).

The panel at Nyero 2 was traced by Posnansky in 1962. In 1968, Posnansky and Nelson reported that all of the images were depicted in various shades of red. According to Chaplin there were traces of “uncopyable” white pigment that were clearly superimposed on the red images, and that bore “close similarity to the white drawings of Nyero 1”, in the lower left hand corner of the panel of Nyero 2 (Posnansky & Nelson 1968: 151; Chaplin 1974: 28). At Nyero 1, the images are all white and comprise concentric circles with a central image of a so-called ‘floral motif’ and an ‘acacia pod’ shape (Lawrance 1953: 151; Chaplin 1974: 27) (Fig. 23).



The paintings, described as badly executed in slapdash workmanship, show several episodes of painting and superimposition (Posnansky & Nelson 1968: 148; Chaplin 1974: 27). At Ngora 1 the paintings are geometric and executed in faded red pigment similar to paintings at Nyero 2, but with some shapes not found at Nyero 1 and 2 (Lawrance 1953: 10; Chaplin 1974: 24) (Fig. 24).

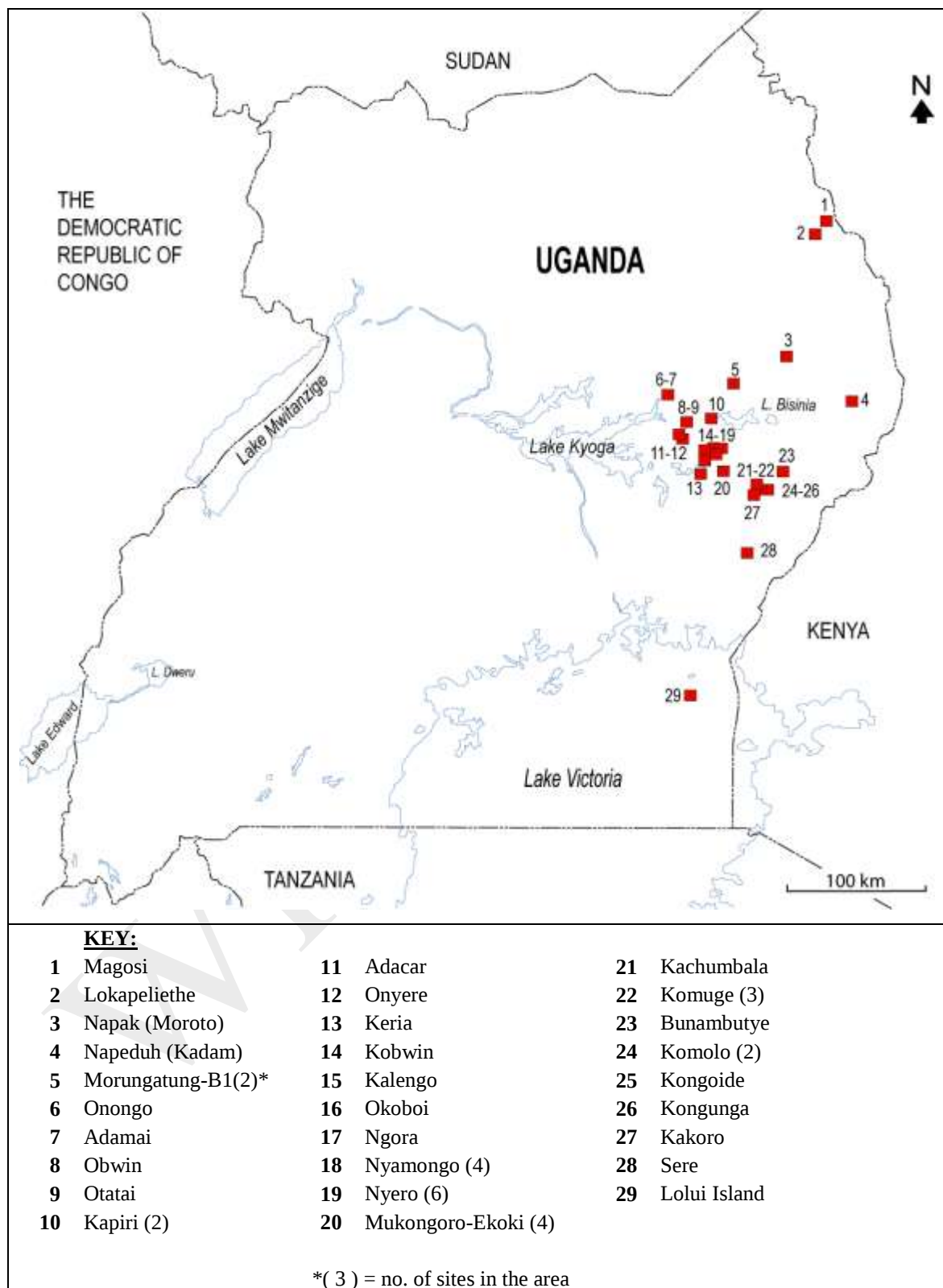
In Asuret county at Obwin hill, is a claret finger-painted image comprising six concentric circles with an exterior adorned with small, evenly spaced outline rectangles and a base similar to two hockey sticks (Fig. 25). The method and manner of depiction of this image is similar to those at the Nyero and Ngora sites (Lawrance 1955: 90; Chaplin 1974: 28). At present, the paintings at Obwin are threatened by quarrying, but the painted image does not appear to have changed since Lawrance (1955) and Chaplin (1974) recorded it.



that these images appear jumbled, probably due to superpositioning (Lawrance 1958: 39). For consistency, I retain the name Onyere.

On a monolith on a hill in Kakoro sub-county, there are rock paintings of an unusual geometric shape and concentric circles similar to those at Nyero, Ngora and Obwin. Chaplin described these faded claret ochre images as interlinked lines, concentric circles and a 'hide' shape (Chaplin 1974: 10). On the same hill at another site, Kakoro 2, there are 'incomplete designs' in red ochre pigment (Lawrance 1958: 40). Kakoro 3 is in the same area; it is a low shelter penetrating far under a massive rock with 'crude white paintings' on the lip of the rock, best viewed by crouching inside the shelter. The images are daubed, probably finger-painted, 'in a noticeably more careless manner' than in the paintings at Kakoro 1 and 2 (Lawrance 1958: 40).

In 1963, Professor Desmond Clark and Dr. Walter William Bishop discovered abstract and geometric rock paintings at Magosi, similar to those found at Nyero (Posnansky & Cole 1963: 104). According to Posnansky and Cole, this is the most northerly instance of geometric paintings in Uganda (Posnansky & Cole 1963: 104; Chaplin 1974:17). Chaplin (1974) described these images as consisting of a circle surrounded by three squares with rounded edges, the outer edge of one intersected by a phallic shape on one side. On the other, there is an angular image suggestive of a semi-naturalistic head of an ox (Chaplin 1974:19).



According to Robbins, the good state of preservation enabled a clear identification of the horns and ears of the animals depicted, as a giraffe looking over its shoulder (Robbins 1970:79). Robbins suggested that the paintings were made as hunters waited for game (*ibid.*). The Lokapelieth paintings of concentric circles are similar to the engraved concentric circle designs on Loteteleit hill. The distribution of sites is shown in Figure 26.

At Lokapelieth, there is a “vivid depiction of a giraffe and a number of hieroglyphs” (Wilson 1970: 141). Similar reports of engravings depicting men and animals resembling giraffe, oryx, buffalo, flamingo, small gazelles, elephant rhino and long horned antelope were recorded at the southern end of Lake Turkana in Kenya (Adamson 1946; Soper 1968: 191) are said to have stylistic traits linking them to the Sahara rock art tradition (Robbins 1970: 79). It is probable that these figurative depictions are an indication that the northern areas of Uganda and northern Kenya may straddle two hunter-gatherer rock art zones.

On Lolui islands, there are several rock art sites (Posnansky 1961; Chaplin 1974: 13). The largest and most spectacular is referred to as ‘the sanctuary’, or the main site (Fig. 27). It is the most impressive of all rock art sites and comprises several huge supporting boulders, four of which are extensively painted near the entrance to the rock chamber (Posnansky 1961: 106; Chaplin 1974: 15, 40; Posnansky *et al.* 2005: 76). The sites at Lolui probably constitute

