

Philosophical Questions

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Gentrain

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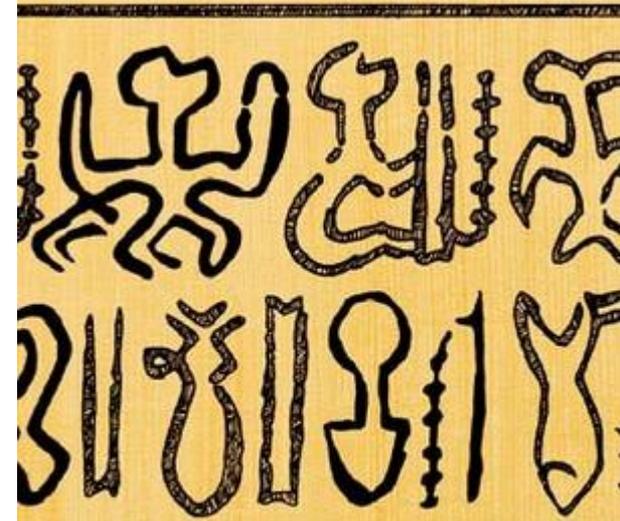
Philosophy and the pre-modern mind

Philosophical questions

1. Who tells the stories of pre-modern hunter-gatherers?
2. What is at stake in these narratives?
3. How do we interact with perspectives which challenge our own?
4. What assumptions about pre-modern peoples are we bringing into our investigation?
5. How do we see this impacting life in the twenty-first century?



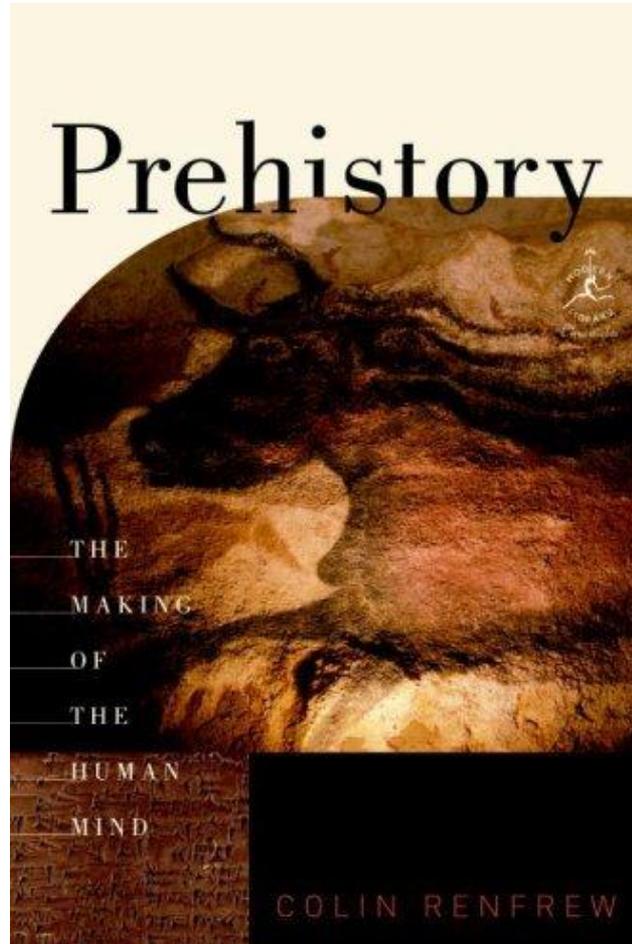
PAUL RADIN
Primitive Man
as Philosopher



Prehistory

THE
MAKING
OF
THE
HUMAN
MIND

COLIN RENFREW



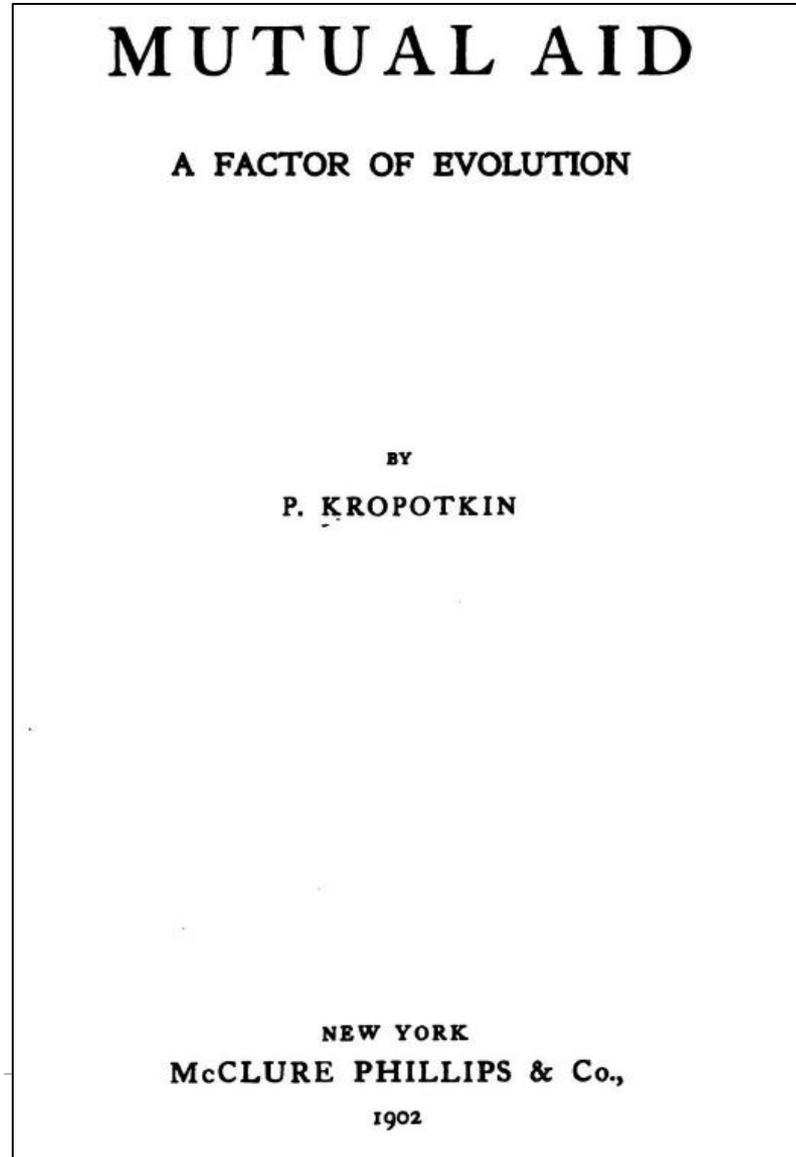
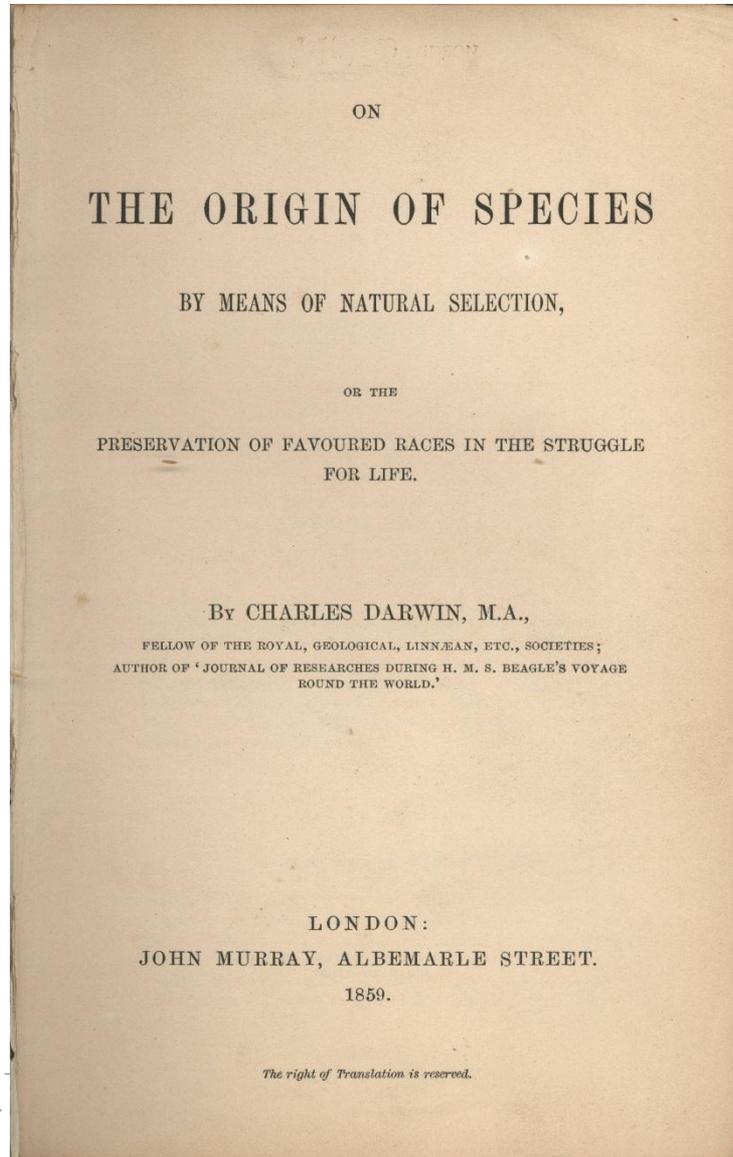
James C. Scott
AUTHOR OF *SEEING LIKE A STATE*

Against the Grain

A DEEP HISTORY OF THE EARLIEST STATES



Knowledge production is political



Competition or cooperation?

Kropotkin, the author of *Mutual Aid*, read Darwin's work before setting out on his own project:

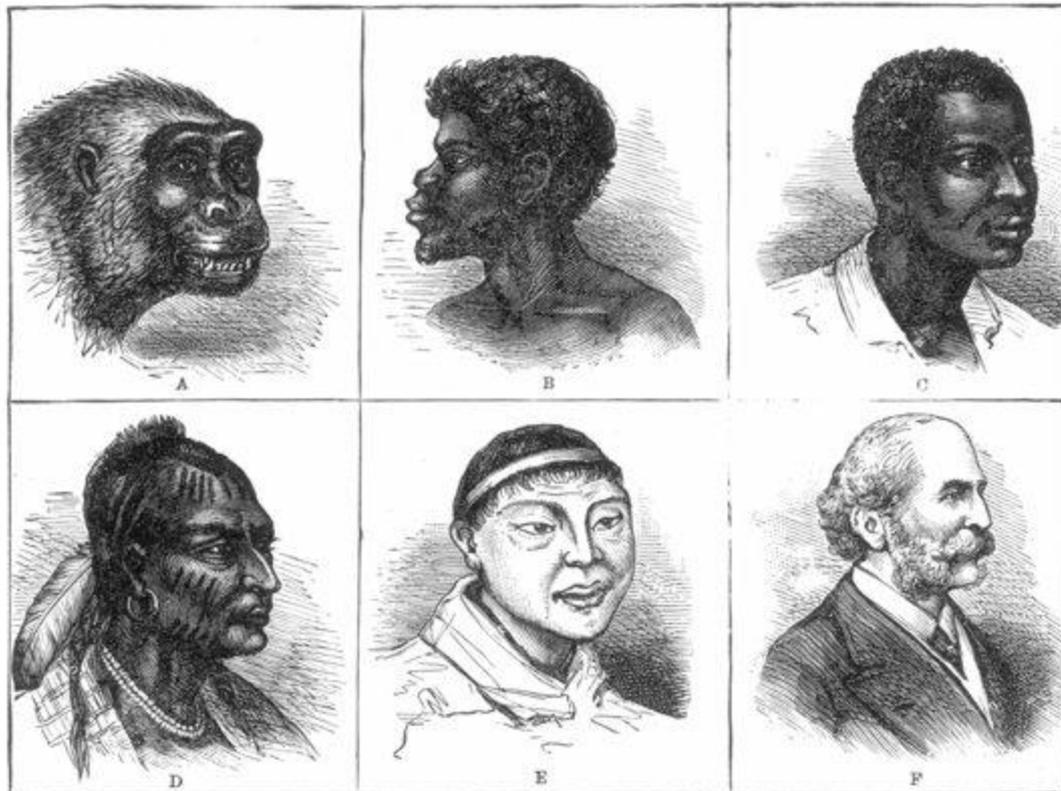
... I failed to find... although I was eagerly looking for it ... that bitter struggle for the means of existence among animals belonging to the same species, which was considered by most Darwinists as the dominant characteristics of the struggle for life and the main factor of evolution.

... we see that, in the animal world, progressive development and mutual aid go hand in hand, while the inner struggle within the species is concomitant with retrogressive development.



Darwinism and colonization

- ▶ Social Darwinism
 - ▶ Combined theories of natural selection and Herbert Spencer
 - ▶ Used to justify imperialism, colonialism, resource extraction



PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF MAN.—(2) EVOLUTION ILLUSTRATED WITH THE SIX CORRESPONDING LIVING FORMS.

The spread of “superior” culture



Apollo Belvedere



Greek



Negro



Creole Negro



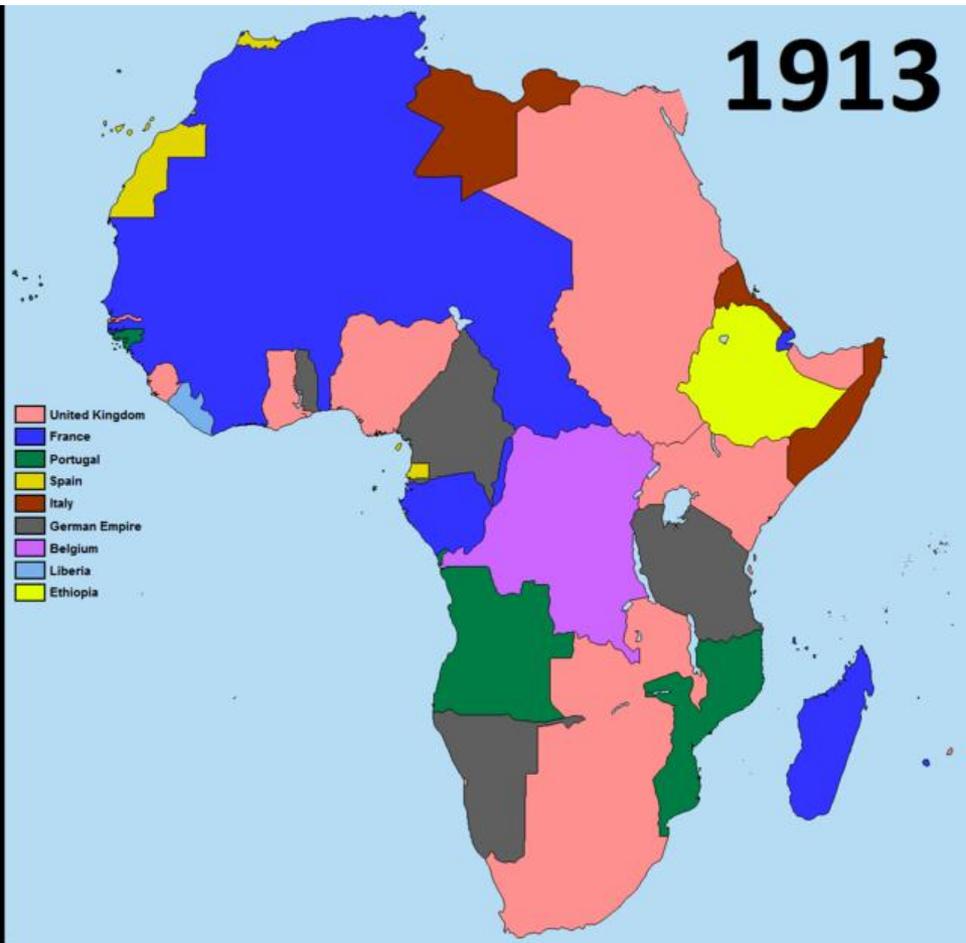
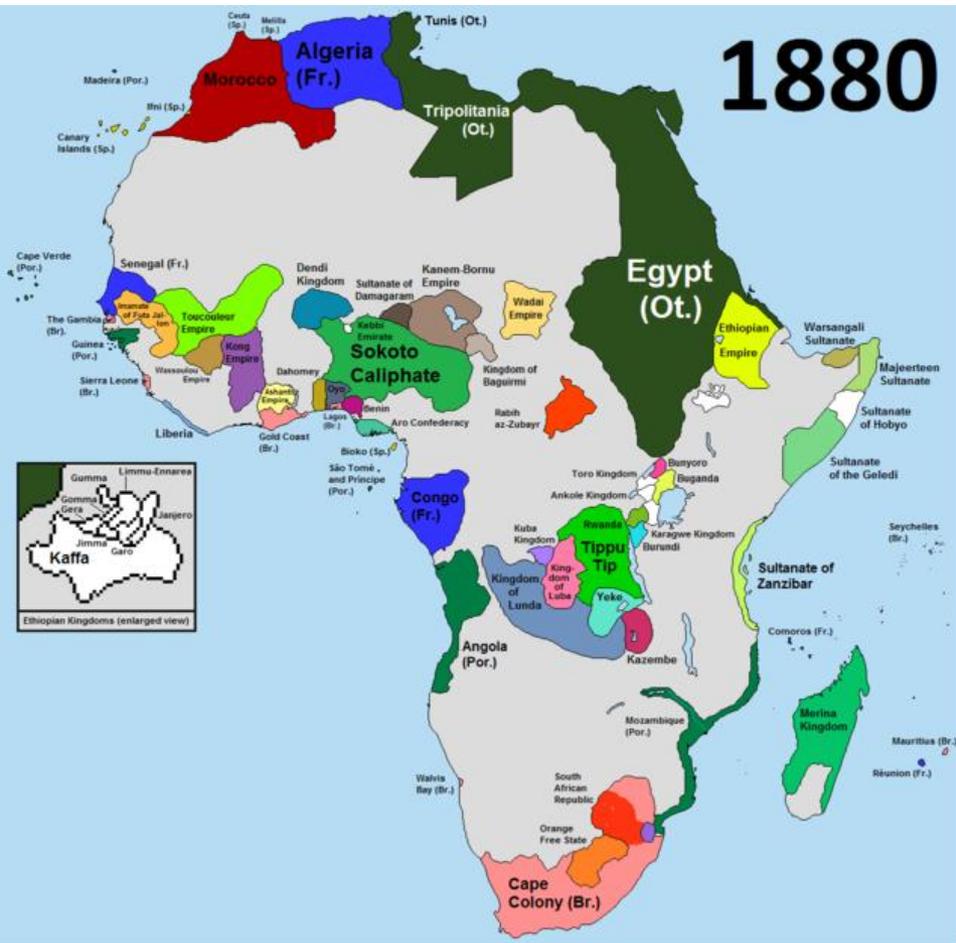
Young chimpanzee



Young chimpanzee

Yet the judgments civilized peoples have passed on the aborigines, we may be sure, were not initially based on any calm evaluation of facts. If the aborigines were regarded as innately inferior, this was due in part to the tremendous gulf in custom and belief separating them from the conquerors, in part to the apparent simplicity of their ways, and in no small degree to the fact that they were unable to offer any effective resistance. - Neni Panourgiá, Preface, *Primitive Man as Philosopher*





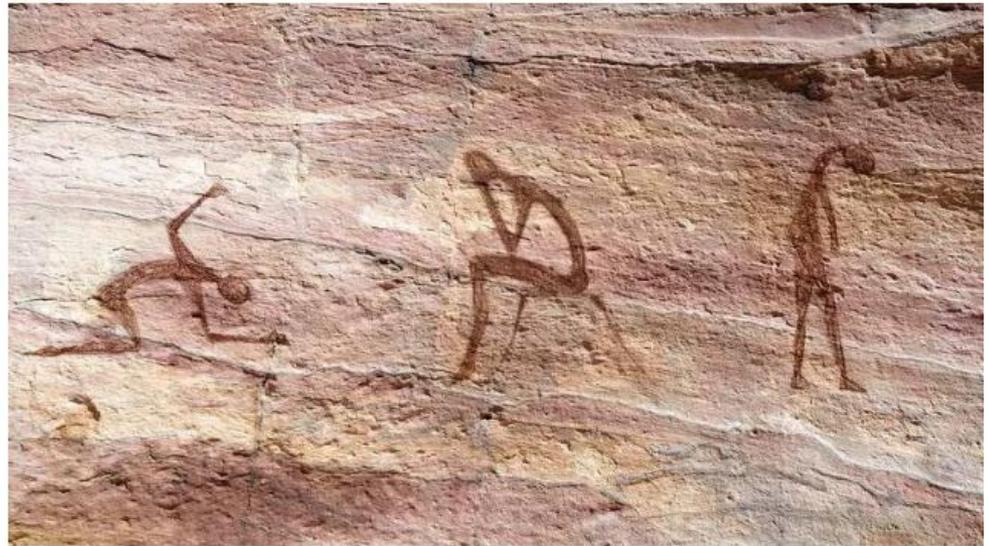
Towards a pre-historical philosophy

- ▶ What happens when we die?
- ▶ The structure of the natural world
- ▶ Methods concerning truth and falsehood
- ▶ Nature of right and wrong

NEWS

Newly Discovered Cave Paintings Suggest Early Man Was Battling A Lot Of Inner Demons

4/17/14 9:49am • SEE MORE: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY ▾



The paintings indicate that early humans had “some pretty heavy stuff” weighing on their minds, archaeologists said.

CANTABRIA, SPAIN—An archaeological team from the University of Cambridge announced Wednesday the discovery of cave paintings in

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Transformations

From hunter-gatherer to agrarian

Paleolithic Period

- ▶ Hunter-gatherers are more highly conscious of a spiritual dimension in their daily lives.
- ▶ The divine was a stable backdrop to ordinary activity – nothing was profane.
- ▶ Early philosophies encouraged people to see that objects in reality embodied *something else* – the very otherness of the object made it holy
- ▶ Felt totally a part of the natural world
- ▶ Used myths to come to terms with death and to guide behavior
- ▶ Animals not inferior, but had superior knowledge that the shaman could access through ritual and trance.

Neolithic Period

- ▶ The beginnings of agrarian ways of knowing
- ▶ Humans began to see themselves as molders and shapers of the natural world
- ▶ Changing relationship to animals: no longer with superior access to the divine, but utilitarian
- ▶ Settled communities developed social hierarchies which required more rigid political philosophies to address and explain power differences
- ▶ Changing spiritual orientation focused on the earth and the seasons



Symbol and spirit

from Karen Armstrong's *Short History of Myth*

- ▶ Modern mind separates religious and secular
 - ▶ For paleolithic hunters, the sacred permeated all aspects of life
 - ▶ What was seen was transparent to the counterpart in the divine world
 - ▶ Work, play, and spiritual life were not separate – hunting, basket weaving and music were all both daily affairs and sacred activities
 - ▶ Indigenous in Australia → Dreamtime → construction or revelation of meaning
 - ▶ Spiritual world compelling reality → myth of the fall
 - ▶ Symbol: to the modern it is separation, but in ancient Greek *symbolleîn* mean “to throw together”
-



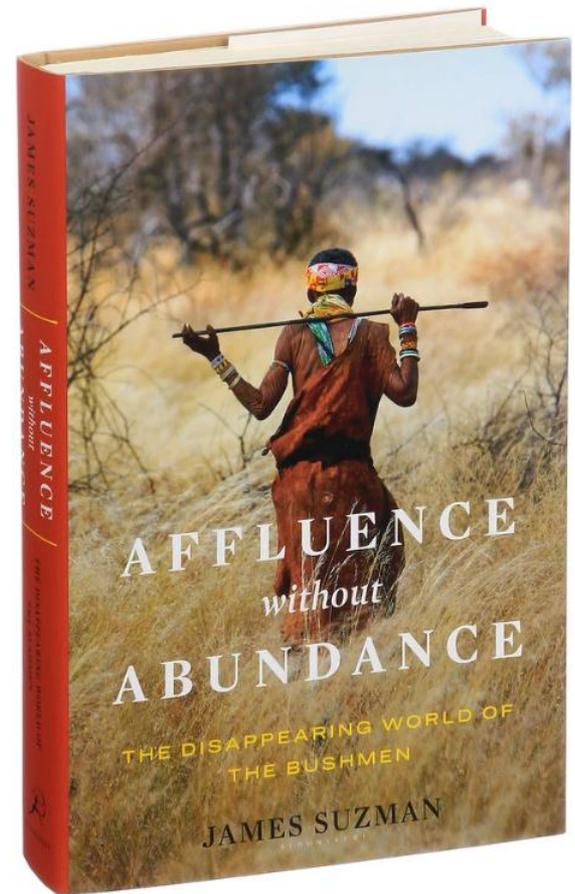
Three huancas overlooking the city of Huaraz (middle ground). One has tumbled over.



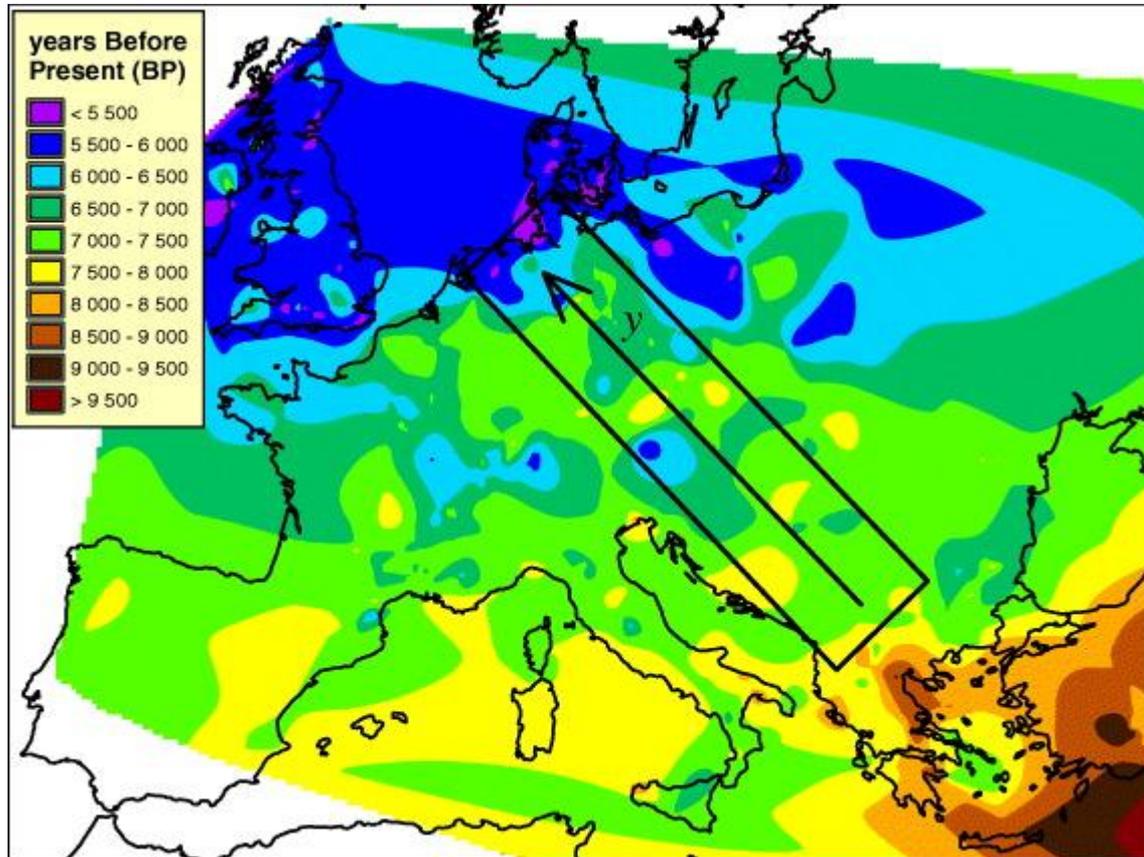
What is the best way to live?

- ▶ What is work? What is play?
- ▶ Individual? Or collective identity?
- ▶ What is our relationship to our food? To our natural world?

A study back in the 1960s found the Bushmen have figured out a way to work only about 15 hours each week acquiring food and then another 15 to 20 hours on domestic chores. The rest of the time they could relax and focus on family, friends and hobbies.



Neolithic expansion stalled by resistance from nomadic people



Chronology of the Neolithic wave of advance in Europe. Map obtained by interpolation of 765 early Neolithic data published by Pinhasi.

“Anisotropic dispersion, space competition and the slowdown of the Neolithic transition”

Neus Isern I and Joaquim Fort I

Published 3 December 2010

New Journal of Physics, Volume 12

Artist's rendition of Uruk (approx. 4,000 BCE to 700 CE)



Landowner horrifies villagers by threatening to invite gypsies on to land in planning row

A LANDOWNER left villagers horrified after he threatened to move gypsies on to a field opposite their homes in Leicestershire unless they backed his house-building plan.

Enforcement action could be taken against Gypsies near Norwich Airport

Luke Powell luke.powell@archant.co.uk [@LukePowell88](https://twitter.com/LukePowell88)

PUBLISHED: 09:28 18 August 2018 | UPDATED: 09:28 18 August 2018

Travellers illegally camping on Witley Parish Council's playing field ordered to leave

Witley Parish Council, Waverley Borough Council and Surrey Police are working together to remove the unauthorised encampment

Travellers 'assumed by police to be criminals rather than victims'

Biased approach to Travellers, Gypsies and Roma may breach equality laws, says report

The Roma are yet again scapegoats for society's ills

Kevin McKenna

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness



Asia & Pacific

Mongolia's nomadic way of life threatened by climate change, neglect, modernity

My community is vehemently against Travellers settling on a local common. How can I challenge this?

