Dead souls: the language of Hadza animal names

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Hadza I

- ❖ A language with clicks included by Greenberg in Macro-Khoisan, but now usually considered to be an isolate
- ❖ Alec Knight and Joanna Mountain claimed in 2003 that Hadza showed some of the most divergent mtDNA in the human 'tree' and linked this (quite spuriously) with clicks
- ❖ Hadza were a foraging people when anthropological investigations were first undertaken by James Woodburn but are now largely settled
- ❖ About 800 speakers

Hadza

The Hadza people live on the southeast border of Lake Eyasi, a salt lake.

The Hadza live SE of Lake Nyasi in North-Central Tanzania

This is the site of one of the most important Pleistocene sites in East Africa, recently re-excavated by Domingues-Rodrigo et al (2007)

Almost all the fauna hunted by Hadza today are recorded archaeologically as well as some extinct species.

Hadza II

- ❖ Disastrous settlement policies have been undertaken over the years leading to community fragmentation
- ❖ At the same time, land encroachment and hunting regulation have seriously impacted on the traditional Hadza subsistence pattern
- ❖ However, support for Hadza through IWGIA and other NGOs has allowed them to make some response. They recently fought off an attempt by the Tanzanian government to hand over their land in its entirety to wealthy Arab hunters.
- ❖ However, this has also led to globalisation and Swahilisation
- ❖ So how long they can survive culturally remains problematic

Hadza animal names I

- ❖ As might be expected, Hadza have a rich and complex vocabulary of the natural world.
- ❖ Hadza animal names are often multiple, with special names for large males, and 'hunting' names, i.e. names used when an animal is seen
- ❖ One of particularly unusual feature is the use of distinctive lexemes applied to dead animals, especially for large species, that are not taboo for some reason.
- ❖ The 'dead animal' terms are not in direct opposition to live animals, but are something like triumphal exclamations made when the animal is killed
- ❖ Surprisingly, they are verb forms, and as such can take suffixes denoting number and gender of the speakers as well as possessive suffixes

Example of the word for 'zebra'

Speaking to		Masculine	Feminine
One person	sg.	hantʰaɦeʔe	hantʰaɦiʔi
	pl.	hantʰáɦitʃíʔi	hantʰáɦetéʔe
Men	sg.	hantátasí	hantáɦetási
	pl.	hantáɦasí	hantáɦitʃʰasí
Mixed or women	sg.	hantátate	hantáɦetate
	pl.	hantáɦate	hantáɦitʃʰáte

Hadza animal names II

- ❖ It is possible to refer to a dead animal in other contexts with their usual name
- ❖ There are some thirteen terms applied to killed animals, all medium to large and all but the ostrich, mammals
- ❖ The principal hunted species are giraffe, impala, buffalo and zebra, all of which have their own triumphal names
- ❖ They mostly apply to individual species, or groups of species. For example, the large antelopes are grouped together and so are the predatory cats and the smaller antelopes
- ❖ There are some surprising omissions, such as the hyenas, the hunting dog, the crocodile and the large monitor lizards

Hadza animal names III

❖ Some of these appear to be explicable by cultural factors; for example the hyena (the larger spotted hyena) was formerly considered to eat corpses, and hyena meat is not eaten

❖ lions and leopards are eaten (!), rather uncommonly in Africa

❖ The monitor lizard (very unusually in Africa) is not used for food, but Hadza not eat snakes, amphibians, fish and crustaceans so this is explicable

❖ The inclusion of the ostrich (the marked meaning) and other large standing birds such as the secretary bird, and the large bustards, seems ot indicate their importance as hunted species

Hadza names for dead animals I

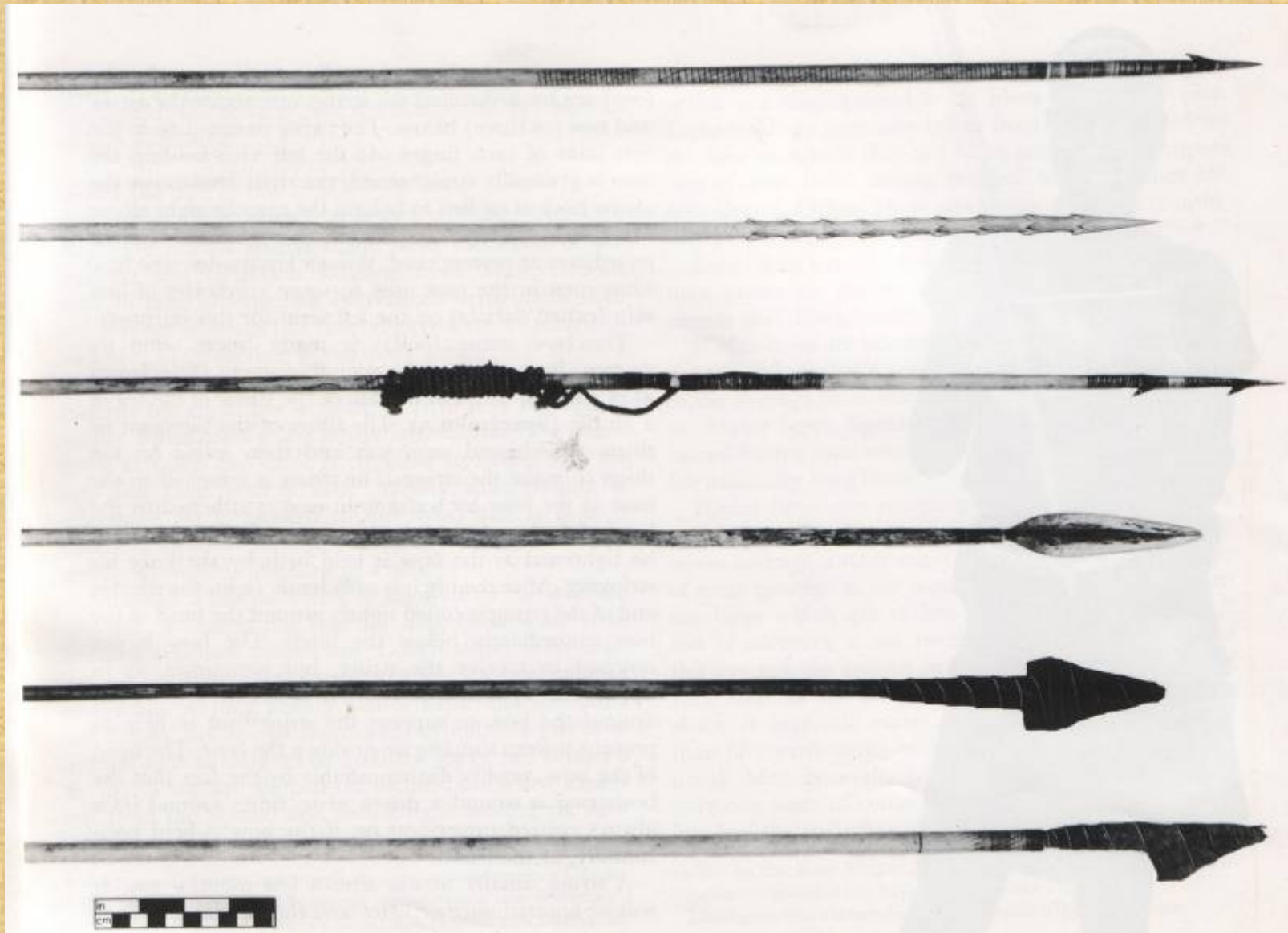| Species	Masculine	Feminine	Usual
zebra	hantʰaɦe-ʔe	hantʰaɦi-ʔi	dóŋgò-ko
rhino	hùkʰùɦe-ʔé	hùkʰùɦi-ʔi	cʎʰákátè
buffalo	teɬeɦeʔe	tíɬíɦiʔi	nák'ómá-kò
impala	tʎ'uŋkʰuːɦiʔi	tʎ'uŋkʰuːɦeʔe	p⁽ʰ⁾ópʰò-kò

Hadza animal names IV

- ❖ Some of the groupings seem rather surprising, lion with eland, or elephant and hippo
- ❖ This seems to be connected with cultural salience; the eland has great prestige when killed. Eland also have special significance among Tanzanian Bantu and other Khoisan
- ❖ Impala, on the other hand has a category of its own distinct from the other antelopes
- ❖ There is a very approximate correlation between gender and the size of the animal; almost all the smaller animals have a feminine gender as a marked term
- ❖ More salient animals have several names, usually one basic and other terms that occur in specialised contexts, such as folk-tales. Interestingly, these secondary names are not usually analysable
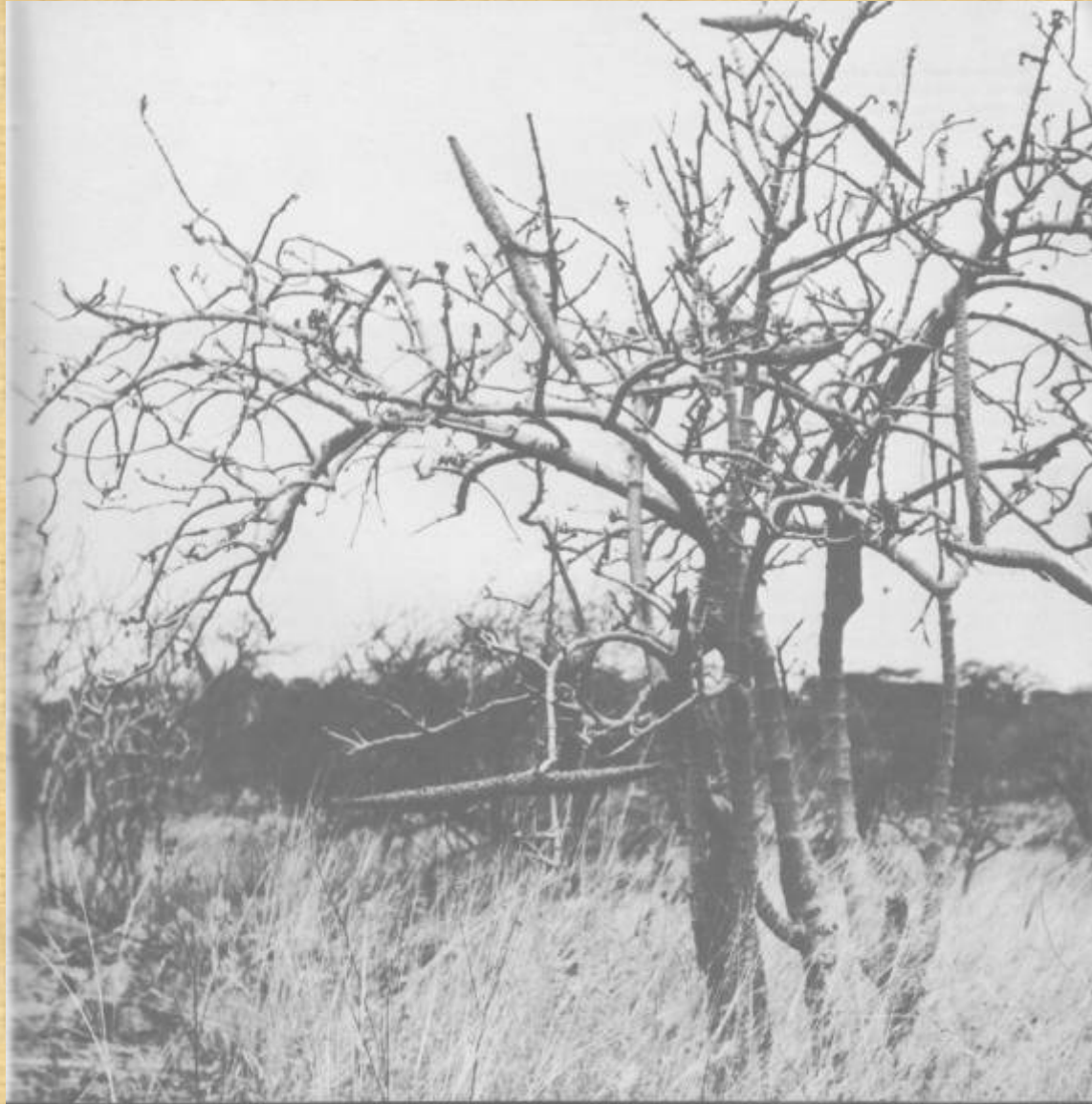
Hadza hunters

Hadza arrows

Strophanthus sp. used for arrow poison

Hadza animal names V

- ❖ There is virtually no relationship between the triumphal terms and the usual names for animals.
- ❖ 'leopard' is the single exception with hè!ŋé the triumphal name and !ŋé: a secondary 'ordinary' name
- ❖ A common but not universal feature of triumphal names is an hV- prefix which general shows a copy-vowel with the stem
- ❖ Thus hùbù-ʔé 'lion', hè!ŋé 'leopard', hèpéʔ 'greater kudu'
- ❖ This morpheme is quite common in other Hadza vocabulary but has no clear meaning
- ❖ No etymologies are apparent for the triumphal names and they do not seem to be borrowed from any neighbouring language or resemble Khoisan or Sandawe

Hadza animal names VI: etymologies

ostrich	huʃuɦeʔe	? < huʃu: 'to swell up, puff up'
baboon	!ŋokʰɦeʔe	? <! ŋokʰo 'thirst' (refers to its concave stomach)

Hadza animal names VII

- ❖ The most puzzling aspect of this is what determines whether animals have triumphal names
- ❖ Bonny Sands suggested that it was connected with the use of poison arrows but Hadza do not waste poison arrows on 'small' animals such as baboons and duikers or klipspringers
- ❖ Almost all the animals fall into the category k^h*alimo* which includes all mammals, ostrich, turtles and tortoises and edible bats
- ❖ Cultural salience is also clearly relevant; for example the three most culturally salient animals in Hadza are the lion, eland and giraffe (in curious contrast to many other African cultures)
- ❖ Perhaps forthcoming analysis of folk-tales will produce more insights

Hadza honey-hunting

❖ The greater honey-guide (*Indicator indicator*) is widely believed in Africa to point both humans and animals, particularly the honey-badger (*Mellivora capensis*) in the direction of bee's nests

❖ The advantage of this is that honey-guides can digest beeswax, but they cannot break open bees' nests to get it

❖ It has long been argued that this is an example of a very ancient man-animal co-adaptation, perhaps dating back to early *Homo sapiens*

❖ However, the honey-badger is also able to break open bees' nests and it would be to the advantage of the honey-guide also to draw the honey-badger to promising sites.

❖ This has been reported often in the literature, for example first by Sparrman in 1777 and also by Attenborough (1998) and Zimmerman, Turner, and Pearson (1999)

❖ Although not all biologists believe this (of course!) it is embedded in Hadza thinking

Greater honey-guide (*Indicator indicator*)

juv.

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Honey-badger (*Mellivora capensis*)

Hadza honey-hunting II

- ❖ Hadza say that the honey-guide used to 'talk' to the honey-badger and shows the way to the nest.
- ❖ This language is now used to engage in a dialogue with the honey-guide as is dramatised in the following short film
- ❖ These dialogues are conducted in whistles but no one-to-one translation is possible, as the whistle partly imitates the singing of the honey-guide
- ❖ This is acted out in a sort of traditional drama, with two performers whistling the dialogue
- ❖ Curiously, Hadza also have a ritual whistle-speech, imitating tonal contours of ordinary speech, but this is not the same as that used in the dialogue with the honey-guide

Hadza honey-hunting drama

Film shown here

Thanks

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