

The Hadzabe of Tanzania: People and Land in Trouble

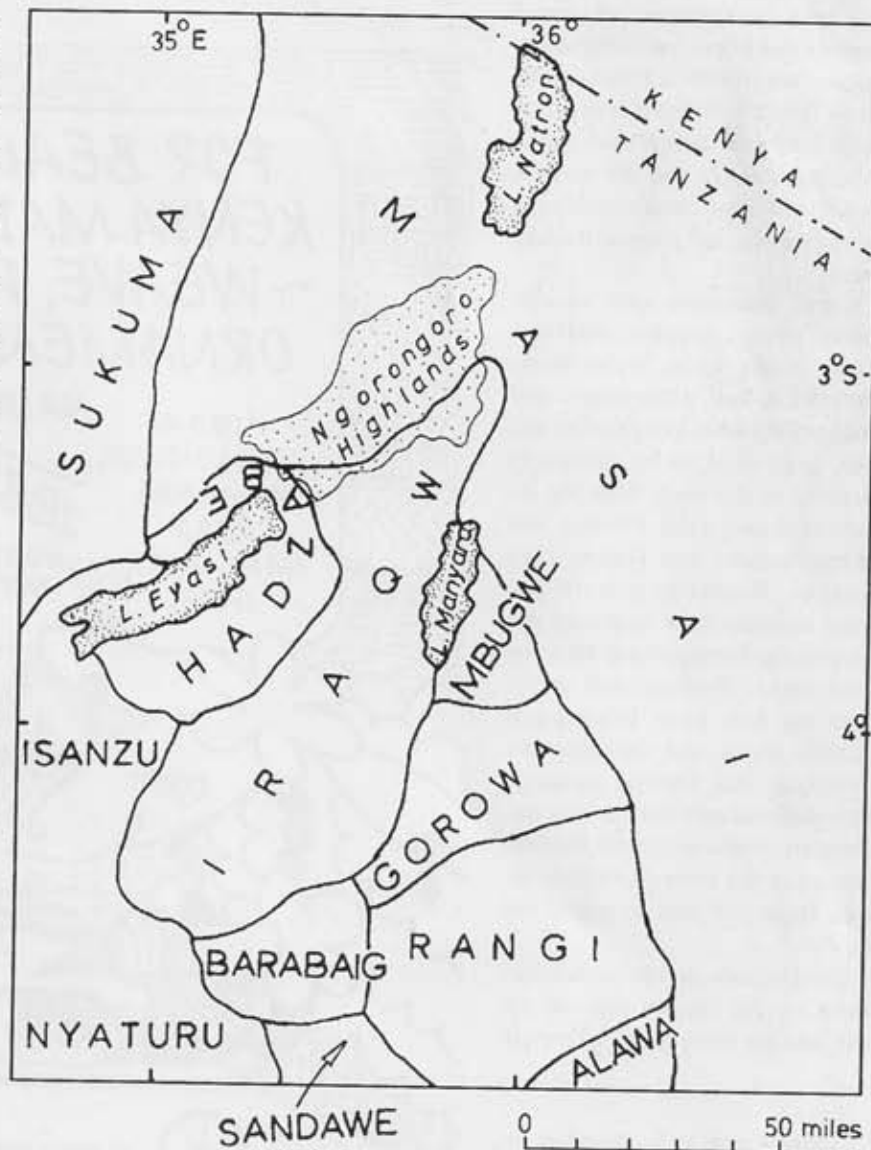
A combination of factors that began in the late 1940s is now threatening the future of the Hadzabe, and of the environment and natural resources on which they have traditionally depended. Their land is being taken over by other peoples, and sport-hunting has worsened their situation. Daniel Stiles presents a description of this little-known people.

Introduction

The Hadzabe (pl.: Hadza, sing.) are a small tribe of hunter-gatherers numbering less than 1,000 people living mainly to the east of Lake Eyasi in Tanzania, though a few scattered groups also live on the west side near Mt Oldeani. They were originally known to outsiders as the WaTindiga or WaKindiga, a name given to them by their neighbours.¹ Prior to the 1940s the Hadzabe occupied a home territory of approximately 5,000 sq km around Lake Eyasi, with the Bantu WaSukuma to the north-west, the Irawq in the highlands to the north-east and the Isanzu to the south-west. One group of Hadzabe acculturated to the Isanzu and took up farming, but the rest regard hunting and gathering as an honourable way to make a living and as the proper way of life for a true Hadza. The Hadzabe were given the right to hunt during colonial times by the Fauna Conservation Ordinance, though the Game Ordinance outlawed the use of poison on arrows. Since independence the Tanzanian government has followed a policy of settling the Hadzabe and turning them into farmers, with limited success.

The Hadzabe have been a focus of anthropological research since the late 1950s because of their traditional hunting way of life, and because of their unusual language. The Hadza language contains four of the same clicks heard in the Khoisan (Bushman/Hottentot) languages of southern Africa, and some vocabulary seems to have a shared origin. There has been much debate about whether to classify Hadza within Khoisan, however, as there are also great differences between them. In general, one of two opinions is held by various linguists: (1) Hadza is distantly related to Khoisan and should be included in

the language family,² or (2) Hadza is an isolate language, a remnant of a language family that no longer exists.³ Fleming has pointed out that if Hadza is historically related to Khoisan, it opens the possibility that the language family originated in East Africa and later moved south.⁴ The Hadzabe do not look like San (Bushmen), however, nor are their genetic blood frequencies similar.⁵



Map showing the location of the Hadza homelands, and their neighbours.

Land and Environment

The Hadza area is semi-arid, with an average annual rainfall of 375-500 mm in the lower areas around the lake, rising to 600-700 mm in the Yaida Hills to the east. The dry season lasts from approximately May to October, with rain starting in November and peaking in February-April. The vegetation is mainly acacia-commiphora bush, with a large grassy plain in the Yaida Valley, and an area of doum palms (*Hyphaene*) along the north-eastern edge of the lake in an area known as Endamagha. A lovely fig, tamarind and fever-tree forest grows along the lower stretches of the Barai River in the Mangola area, but farther down the lake shore large areas have been cleared for mechanised agriculture to grow mainly onions and maize.

The Rift Valley scarp to the west of the lake rises 600 metres; Mt Oldeani (3,200 m) and the Ngorongoro-Karatu highlands, located to the north-east, feed Lake Eyasi with streams and subsurface drainage. Water points are particularly important to the Hadzabe in this dry environment, and they are scattered around the edge of the lake in springs, seasonal streams and pools, and around the Yaida plain, which at times can be partly flooded. Water is also found in the trunks of baobab trees and in rock crevices. In the dry season, Lake Eyasi shrinks considerably, exposing a white, salt plain on the lake shore.

Large mammals such as elephant, rhino, giraffe, buffalo, eland, zebra, kudu, water buck, hartebeest and wildebeest, and smaller mammals like gazelles and wart hogs used to be extremely plentiful in the area. With the influx of Irawq (aka Mbulu) and Isanzu farmers and Datoga (aka Mangati, Barabaig) pastoralists, many animals have migrated out towards the Serengeti and Ngorongoro parks. Professional sport-hunting has also frightened animals away, and the Hadzabe complain that finding game is more difficult now than in the past. There are substantial plant food resources in the form of various tubers, fruits and nuts to round out the diet.⁶

The Hadzabe divide up their territory on the eastern side of the lake into six main areas.⁷ There is

the fertile and well-watered doum palm area of Endamagha at the north-east end of the lake, part of which is in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. This area grades into the drier acacia-commiphora zone to the east at the foot of Mt. Oldeani. South of this around the lower Barai River is the Mangola area. Farther south still is Siponga around Siponga Mountain in the Yaida Hills, and to the west of this area towards Isanzu is Tli'ika ('west'), running from the lake up into the Yaida Hills until Han Ψ abi* ('the rocks') begins, which is a hilly, rocky area. The Yaida plains, called Barangidako (seasonal 'lake' or 'swamp') by the Hadzabe, form the last geographical area, but they do not use the area much since the Isanzu and Datoga have occupied it. It is also a poor area for plant foods and honey, and offers little cover for stalking game. The plains, once covered by herds of wildlife, are now occupied by cattle.⁸ An area called Pazi to the west of the lake used to be occupied by Hadzabe, but today the WaSukuma live there. I was told that only small numbers of Hadzabe now live around the north-west part of the lake and towards the rift scarp.

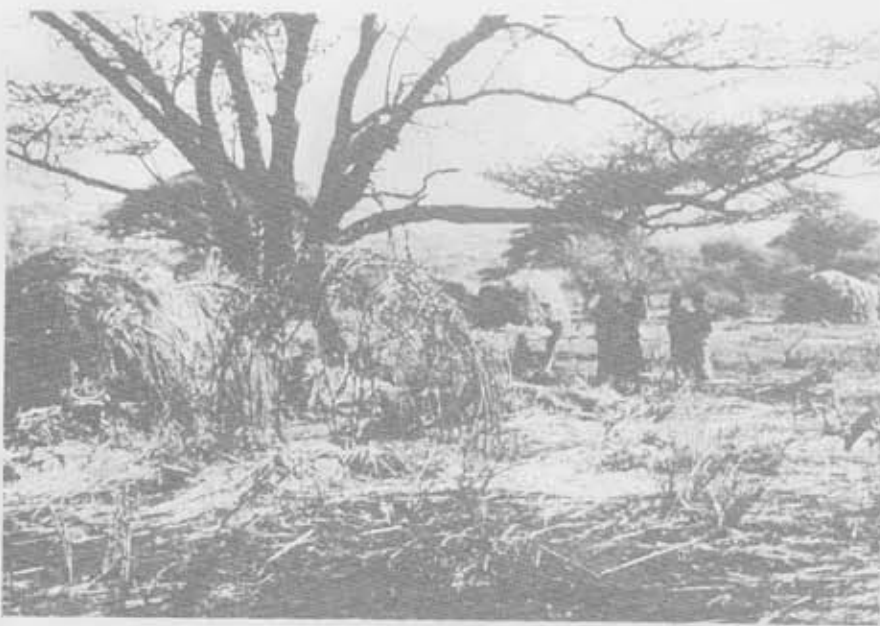
FOR BEAUTIFUL
KENYA MADE CRAFT
~WEAVE, POTTERY,
ORNAMENTS~

ALSO AT NAIROBI
LIBRA HOUSE,
MOMBASA
ROAD
GAME PARK
GATE.

HARRY THUKU RD.
NORFOLK
HOTEL
KIJABE ST.

the spinner's web
KIJABE ST. P.O. BOX 52164, NAIROBI, KENYA. TEL. 228647.

* Marks such as Ψ , Ψ and \mathcal{N} in Hadza words indicate different click sounds



A Hadza encampment being built. In the foreground is a framework ready for its covering of grass, while completed huts are seen to the left and in the background.

Settlement and Subsistence Systems

The Hadzabe used to live in small groups of from 3 to 37 adults, plus children, with an average of 18 adults recorded by Woodburn,⁹ though today most the settlements are larger as people settle in semi-permanent villages. Their huts are flimsy grass domes with bent-bough frames (made from *Cordia* or *Grewia*). The traditional camps vary in size according to season. In the dry season people cluster near water points, so the camps are relatively large, and the camps break up and scatter in the rainy season. The reason is two-fold: a need for water and the fact that success in hunting large animals able to feed large groups of people is more common in the dry season. The turnover of individual people and families was high at any time, however, and the composition of any one group constantly changed. Camps also moved frequently, about every two weeks, for a variety of reasons: death or illness in camp, need for materials (stones for smoking-pipes, thatching), water shortage, to go and trade honey with neighbours, to avoid the build-up of vermin in the huts, and a general feeling by Hadzabe that living in one place for too long is bad. Moves are rarely done because of a scarcity of food resources, though a move would be made to go to abundant resources (eg. large mammal kill, baobab grove during fruiting).

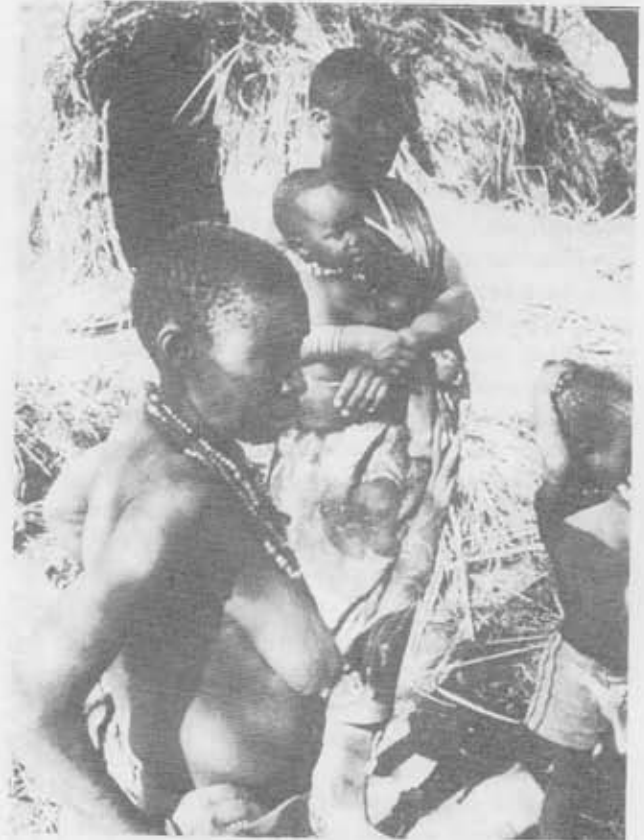
Moves seem to occur more often in the wet season than in the dry, but Woodburn had trouble coming to any hard conclusions.¹⁰ Part of the problem might be due to the fact that he did not distinguish the different types of Hadza settlements. I have found with other hunter-gatherers that I have studied, such as the Boni (KP&P Nos 11 and 20) and the Mikea (KP&P No 26), that they have different types of settlements according to function, often linked to season. Woodburn noted only the *Vets'a*, the camp. Hadza informants told me of other groupings which they call *ng'ambiko* and *gibaraja*.

The *Vets'a*¹¹ seems to be the principal camp, linked to a geographical place usually repeatedly used. The places are

named after geographical features such as a hill, water point or common tree species. Several camps can be in the same general area. A group living in a *Vets'a* is known as a *Dukwa* or *luḏu*. From the *Vets'a* a smaller group can hive off for a limited period to go hunting or honey collecting. They will return to the *Vets'a*. This smaller, more temporary camp is called *ng'ambiko*. The houses are smaller than in a regular *Vets'a*. I was told that these exist only in the dry season, and that people live only in *Vets'a* during the rains.

There was much dispute amongst about six informants of what constituted a *gibaraja*. Gudo, my main informant, insisted that it referred to from one to three men going out for not more than one day

to hunt. Pandisha adamantly insisted that it meant a camp-fire, and that any number of people could be involved. A *gibaraja* could also be found in a *Vets'a* or a *ng'ambiko*, but not vice-versa, which Gudo agreed with. In order to assess the significance of this possible settlement variety future research will have to determine what the function of a *gibaraja* is (hunting foray, sitting around a fire, or what?) and what length of time is involved (one day, no night/more than a day and night).



Women and children standing in front of the entrance to one of their flimsy shelters.

Since Woodburn did not distinguish the three types, and probably only made spot counts of camps, he may have missed the fact that *ng'ambiko* and *gibaraja* people returned to *Vets'a* after finishing their business, making camp settlement variability seem greater than it was in reality. Today it appears that people are spending more time in semi-permanent settlements near water points, particularly during the rains. This might be due to the fact that they are being encouraged and assisted to grow crops of maize and millet. Small plots are being planted during the rains, which means that the families involved are more tied down to a place than previously. They also obviously want to be present for the harvest in the dry season.

The importance of understanding settlement variability will be discussed further below, as it is relevant to current issues affecting the Hadzabe.

Traditionally, the Hadzabe obtained 70%-80% of their food by weight from plants, and the balance from meat and honey, although they consider the latter to be their principal foods. Land use is completely communal, and any person or group could hunt or collect anywhere they pleased. Hunting is done almost entirely with bow and arrow by men, either singly or in twos or threes, though women can participate in locating game and in pursuing a hit animal. There is no large group hunting. Birds and hyrax are more commonly killed by stones and/or sticks.¹² The bows are large and powerful, ranging from 1.6 m to over 2 m in length, and to string them shorter men must stand on a rock for additional leverage. The only bows in Africa of comparable size and required pull (100lbs) are found with the Kenyan nyika and coastal Waata.

There are several different types of arrows, according to the intended prey. Metal arrowheads with wooden link-shafts for poison are used for large animals.¹³ The poison is made from either *Strophanthus emini* or *Adenium*, as elements of both have been found in analyses of Hadza poison.¹⁴ The Hadzabe make metal arrowheads by pounding out nails. Wooden tips and lunate barbs are used for birds and small game. Game trails and watering places are favoured places to set up an ambush. From February to April Guinea fowl lay and hatch eggs while nesting in trees. On moonlit nights Hadzabe steal up on the nests and shoot the birds with arrows. They will hunt and eat almost any type of animal or bird, including the hyaena and vulture, but they draw the line at snakes, lizards, terrapins and toads. They enjoy elephant meat, but will not hunt one, as they say that they are too difficult to kill, so they scavenge professional hunter kills and natural deaths.

If a small animal is killed, the hunter will share out the meat only with his family. If a larger animal is killed, the meat will be shared equally with everyone in the camp. There are certain parts reserved for



Hadza hunter beating out an arrowhead from a nail.

SHANGILIA AFRICA



Celebrate Africa

Our Art & Literature series present the best of oral tradition with contemporary Kenyan art.

Colourful books for children explore the savannah, sea and skies of Africa, its wildlife, history and fireside tales.

Jacaranda books are wonderful presents!

JACARANDA DESIGNS LTD

Publishers of Award Winning Books
Posters—Cards—Video—Audio Cassettes
Phone or write for our catalogue.

P. O. BOX 76691 NAIROBI, KENYA
TEL: 569736 OR 47145 FAX: 568353

men and women, and special parts are called *epeme* ('God's meat') reserved for initiated men. These parts usually consist of the heart, meat and fat from the top of the breast, shoulder meat and the neck. These are boiled and eaten in bits on arrow tips away from women. There are reports that Hadzabe used to eat meat raw when they were particularly hungry, but today it seems common to boil or roast it. Hunting and scavenging wild animals used to provide nutritionally sufficient sources of fats and proteins for good health,¹⁵ but I was told that meat is becoming less common in their diet these days.

Plant foods are collected mainly by women for the family, though men will also collect tubers and berries to eat in the bush when they are hungry. The Hadzabe have a very detailed knowledge of the best locations and times for collecting different types of plant foods. Tubers are the main source of carbohydrates in the diet, and women dig them out with wooden digging sticks. Baobab fruit ('monkey bread') forms an important part of the diet in the dry season, and camps will move to exploit baobab groves. The pulp and seeds are pounded on a flat stone into a meal, then briefly boiled in water. The main plant foods are listed in table 1.

Table 1: Plant foods

Hadza Name	Botanical Name	Type
Ñekwa hasa ¹⁶ Ñekwa gadabi Ñekwa tripi	<i>Vigna frutescens</i> A. Rich ssp. <i>frutescens</i>	tuber
shumuko	<i>Vatovaea pseudolablab</i> (Harms.) Gillet	tuber
do'aiko hla'akeko	<i>Vigna macrorhyncha</i> (Harms.) Milne-Redhead	tuber
penzepenze	<i>Vigna</i> sp.	tuber
makalita	<i>Ipomoea transvaalensis</i> Meeuse	tuber
tafape	<i>Salvadora persica</i> L.	berry
undushibi	<i>Cordia gharaf</i> Ehrehb	berry
kongorobe	<i>Grewia bicolor</i> Juss	berry
thakuayabe	<i>Cordia villosa</i>	berry
karalaiya	<i>Opilia</i> sp.	fruit
mhibe	<i>Tamarindus indica</i> L.	pulp
nobako	<i>Adansonia digitata</i> L.	fruit

The Hadzabe obtain maize meal by trade with surrounding farmers in exchange for honey and tamarind pods. These items, along with bush meat and skins, are also traded for tobacco, clothing, beads, knives, axes, hammers and nails to make arrowheads. Tobacco is important for the Hadza, and they have invented cylindrical soft-stone pipes for smoking. One end is stuffed with tobacco and the other with bits of charcoal, which Fosbrooke humorously notes is the forerunner of the cigarette filter. When they smoke they characteristically go into a coughing frenzy, sometimes rolling on the ground, which is quite disturbing when seen for the first time, but be-

comes comical when one realises that it is normal and that they seem to get great enjoyment out of it. They used to trade rhino horn as well, though they did not realise its value and would obtain little in the exchange.¹⁷

Changing Land Use

At the end of last century the Hadzabe had the territory described above pretty much to themselves. They were only disturbed at times by hunting parties in search of ivory, and in which they served as guides, trackers and porters. In the early 20th century coffee and wheat farms were established in the Karatu highlands by Europeans, which pushed some Irawq into Hadza country. Two settlements, one at Yaida and one at Mangola, emerged around the 1920s. Datoga would enter from time to time to graze cattle, but they did not settle in Hadza country because of tsetse fly. In the 1940s a programme of bush clearance to eradicate the tsetse changed everything.

Small numbers of Irawq began moving down from the highlands in the 1940s and 1950s to favourable spots around Mangola, Endamagha and the Yaida valley. Isanzu did the same. They could now bring livestock with them. Datoga could now come more regularly to graze. This process continued up to the 1960s and independence. In 1964-65 the Tanzanian government initiated a pilot villagisation programme, and the Hadzabe were forced into settlements. Schools and health clinics were set up, and non-Hadza settlers were brought from the crowded highlands to start mechanised farming. Most Hadzabe fled back to the bush, but the other people stayed.

As said above, permanent water points are important *¶ets'a* areas for the Hadza, since they allow the people to exploit surrounding resources in the dry season. People do not camp by the water sources, however, but away from them so that they can ambush game that comes to drink. The Hadzabe have now permanently lost the *¶ets'a* areas of Endamagha (many Irawq-owned irrigated agriculture farms), Mangola (to Irawq and Isanzu), Munguli (to Isanzu), Iramba Ndogo (to WaSukuma), Yaeda Chini (mainly to Isanzu) and others. During the dry season, groups would move in and out of these areas in search of game. Since cultivators now live around these favoured areas, game no longer comes near.

Large areas of former bush that once provided berries, fruits, honey and tubers are now being grazed by Datoga livestock, which also reduces the numbers of wild animals who use it. The Datoga, however, are also victims of 'progress'. They are being forced into Hadza country because large areas of their best grazing land has been taken over by the National Agriculture and Food Corporation under the Tanzania Canada Wheat Programme. By 1990, 12% of Datoga land had gone to wheat, and even more is under wheat now.¹⁸

Hadzabe no longer live in the Siponga area because of conflicts with Datoga and Irawq. They have moved north-east to an area they call Gelatu, named after a small rocky hill (officially called Mongo Wa Mono ('River of Pots') after its Isanzu name). A semi-permanent *¶ets'a* has been established here, though the huts are still the traditional grass domes. Oxfam provided seeds, ploughs and oxen to start farming, though all the oxen died and were eaten. Canadian

volunteers (CUSO) are helping obtain famine relief food for the people, and assist in other ways. The Gelatu water source (a stream-bed water hole) is drying up, however, due to deforestation causing drought, according to my Hadza informants. Deforestation has resulted from clearing land for farms, burning by the Datoga to create pasture, and increasingly by commercial charcoal-burning. Huge lorries stream up and down the Mangola-Karatu road to carry it out. Ironically, much of it goes to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), where tree-felling is outlawed.¹⁹

In other areas, Hadza land has been leased out as hunting blocks to professional hunters. At times the hunters hunt illegally at night with spotlights, shooting from vehicles at anything that moves (according to Hadzabe). This has made the animals very shy, and some have migrated out of the area, making Hadza hunting much more difficult. Even more serious, however, is the fact that Hadzabe are legally excluded from the hunting blocks. In early 1992 some Hadza

men in a hunting block were captured by a professional hunting party and taken to the police in Maswa, the district headquarters. They were beaten, and I was told that one died in the cells.

Conclusions

The Hadza people and their former land and resources are being seriously damaged by uncontrolled immigration, land clearance, burning, charcoal-making and professional hunting. The Lake Eyasi-Yaida Hills area is still one of marked beauty and high biodiversity, and not yet badly degraded in relation to other parts of northern and central Tanzania. For the sake of the Hadzabe and of a valuable natural area the Tanzania government should formulate and implement a natural resource management plan for the area, which must include land security of designated areas to enable the Hadzabe to survive.²⁰

Acknowledgements

I would sincerely like to thank Jeannette Hanby and David Bygott for their generous hospitality at Mikwajuni, Kim Ellis and Rainer Joesch for the lift to Endamagha, and Henry Fosbrooke for information and reprints and a very pleasant tea at his Lake House.

References

1. B Cooper, "The Kindiga," *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, No 27 (1949), pp 8-15; H Fosbrooke, "A stone age tribe in Tanganyika," *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol XI, No 41 (1956), pp 3-8; J Woodburn, "The future of the Tindiga," *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, Nos 58-59 (1962), pp 269-273. The WaSukuma call the Hadzabe by the name Bahi.
2. D Bleek, "The Hadzapi or Watindiga of Tanganyika Territory," *Africa*, No IV (1931), pp 273-286; J Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa*, Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1963; C. Ehret, "Proposals on Khoisan reconstruction," paper presented at the International Symposium: African Hunter-gatherers, University of Cologne, January 1985.
3. E Westphal, "The click languages of southern and eastern Africa," in *Current Trends in Linguistics, Vol 7: Sub-Saharan Africa*, (eds) J Berry and J Greenberg, Mouton, The Hague, 1971, pp 367-420; D Elderkin, "The classification of Hadza", University of Dar es Salaam.
4. H Fleming, "Hadza and Sandawe genetic relationships", paper presented at the International Symposium: African Hunter-gatherers, University of Cologne, January 1985.
5. Fleming, "Hadza and Sandawe".
6. K Tomita, "The sources of food for the Hadzapi tribe - the life of a hunting tribe in East Africa," *Kyoto University African Studies*, Vol 1 (1966), pp 157-171; J Woodburn, "An introduction to Hadza ecology," in *Man the Hunter*, (eds) R Lee and I DeVore, Chicago: Aldine, 1968, pp 49-55; A Vincent, "Plant foods in savanna environments: a preliminary report of tubers eaten by the Hadza of northern Tanzania," *World Archaeology*, Vol 17, No 2 (1985), pp 131-147.
7. J Woodburn, "Stability and flexibility in Hadza residential groupings," in *Man the Hunter*, (eds) R Lee and I DeVore, Chicago: Aldine, 1968, pp 103-110. Woodburn gives only four Hadza territories, but I have added Endamagha and Barangidako after visiting the area. Endamagha is near to, but considered distinct from Mangola. One small group of Hadzabe were living near the Yaida settlement in Barangidako at the time of my visit in July 1995.
8. The plains are at least 15 km long by 2-3 km wide. I saw two ostriches and five wildebeest in the entire place. Only two kudu were seen up to that point on the drive from Mangola through Tli'ika and abi.
9. Woodburn, "Stability and flexibility," p 106.
10. J Woodburn, "Ecology, nomadic movement and the composition of the local group among hunters and gatherers: an East African example and its implications," in *Man, Settlement and Urbanism*, (eds) P Ucko, R Tringham and G Dimbleby, London: Duckworth, 1972, pp 193-206.
11. My main informant, a man named Gudo, pronounced the word *nV'etsa*, in which the prefixed 'n' was quite distinct. Woodburn, who is fluent in Hadza, and Bleek, a linguist, both spelled it *Vets'a*, thus I will retain the 'authorised' spelling.
12. Woodburn, "Hadza ecology"; Tomita, "Sources of food for the Hadzapi". The method of killing birds and hyraxes is very similar to the way the Mikea of Madagascar hunt birds and tenrec (*KP&P* No 26).
13. Fosbrooke, "A stone age tribe". See also B Cooper, "The Kindiga".
14. Woodburn, "Hadza ecology"; K Hawkes, J O'Connell, and N Blurton-Jones, "Hunting income patterns among the Hadza," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society London*, B No 344 (1991), pp 243-251.
15. There are three names according to the environment in which the plant is found, Vincent, "Plant foods in savanna environments".
16. Gudo, my guide, seemed particularly disgusted by the fact that they used to exchange a rhino horn for a little tobacco or a few beads, and did not want to even glorify the transaction with the word *biashara* (trade).
17. C Lane, "Barabaig natural resource management: sustainable land use under threat of destruction," *UNRISD Discussion Paper No 12*, 1990, Geneva.
18. The fact that one area is being destroyed to protect another one stresses the fact that environmental management plans must consider off-site as well as on-site factors. Managers of the NCA must be very proud of the fact that they have managed to protect the important highland forest, but it has been partly at the expense of the people, land and biodiversity of the lowlands.
19. Apparently CUSO is working with a European NGO called NOVIB to demarcate land in Yaida Chini Ward of Dongobeshi Division as a Hadza 'exclusion zone', though I have little good information about it.