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978-1-107-06982-4 - Demography and Evolutionary Ecology of Hadza Hunter-Gatherers

Nicholas Blurton Jones

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## Demography and Evolutionary Ecology of Hadza Hunter-Gatherers

The Hadza, an ethnic group indigenous to northern Tanzania, are one of the few remaining hunter-gatherer populations. Archaeology shows 130,000 years of hunting and gathering in their land but Hadza are rapidly losing areas vital to their way of life. This book offers a unique opportunity to capture a disappearing lifestyle.

Blurton Jones interweaves data from ecology, demography, and evolutionary ecology to present a comprehensive analysis of the Hadza foragers. Discussion centers on expansion of the adaptationist perspective beyond topics customarily studied in human behavioral ecology, to interpret a wider range of anthropological concepts.

Analyzing behavioral aspects, with a specific focus on relationships and their wider impact on the population, this book reports the demographic consequences of different patterns of marriage and the availability of helpers such as husbands, children, and grandmothers. Essential for researchers and graduate students alike, this book will challenge pre-conceptions of human sociobiology. Supplementary material is available online at: [www.cambridge.org/Hadza](http://www.cambridge.org/Hadza)

**Nicholas Blurton Jones** is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of California Los Angeles. His research focuses on applying the methods and outlook of animal behavior research in direct studies of human behavior, specifically related to hunter-gatherer cultures. He has conducted numerous field visits to observe and study the last of the remaining hunter-gatherer tribes in Tanzania, and is the editor of *Ethological Studies of Child Behaviour*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1972.

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NICHOLAS BLURTON JONES

Professor Emeritus

University of California Los Angeles



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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107069824](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107069824)

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First published 2016

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Blurton Jones, N. G. (Nicholas G.)  
Demography and evolutionary ecology of Hadza hunter-gatherers / Nicholas Blurton Jones (Professor Emeritus, University of California Los Angeles).

pages    cm. – (Cambridge studies in biological and evolutionary anthropology ; 71)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-06982-4 (Hardback)

1. Hata (African people)–Social life and customs.    2. Hata (African people)–Population.  
3. Hunting and gathering societies–Tanzania–Eyasi, Lake, Region.    4. Demographic anthropology–Tanzania–Eyasi, Lake, Region.    5. Human ecology–Tanzania–Eyasi, Lake, Region.  
6. Sociobiology–Tanzania–Eyasi, Lake, Region.    7. Human behavior–Environmental aspects–Tanzania–Eyasi, Lake, Region.    8. Eyasi, Lake, Region (Tanzania)–Social life and customs.    9. Eyasi, Lake, Region (Tanzania)–Environmental conditions.    I. Title.  
DT443.3.H37B55 2016

305.896–dc23    2015017917

ISBN 978-1-107-06982-4 Hardback

Additional resources for this publication at [www.cambridge.org/Hadza](http://www.cambridge.org/Hadza)

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## Preface and acknowledgments

An effort of this size and duration, fieldwork spread over more than 15 years, data processing, analyzing, writing spread over another decade, depends on the help and support of many individuals and institutions. UCLA rescued me from the bleak economic prospects of the U.K. in the early 1980s, and although I came to realize that the efforts of many future colleagues were involved, Michael McGuire's leadership and guidance was instrumental.

As described in the introduction, Lars Smith, who began research among the Hadza while a graduate student at Harvard, was the key to my beginning to work among the Hadza. Numerous Hadza knew and liked Lars and were happy to receive some more friendly attention from someone he introduced to them. Tanzania in the 1980s was an almost impossible place to do anything. However, Lars had the skills and was willing to pass them on. He even had two prepared field assistants to offer. One of them, Gudo Mahiya, became vital to my demography project. His understanding of our project, and our wish for direct evidence grew rapidly. His quiet, unobtrusive manner was perfect for helping me interview women as well as men. Gudo also became an expert helper for Bonny Sands' language research, and encouraged by Jeanette Hanby and assisted by Jeanette and Bonny, he collected and recorded a number of traditional Hadza stories. These were assembled into a small booklet. By sending copies to Mangola (usually by hand with Frank Marlowe) for Gudo to sell to tourists, we were, for a while, able to provide Gudo with a useful pension after my fieldwork ended.

Permission for research in Tanzania was given by the Commission on Science and Technology. I am grateful to the commission and its officers for facilitating permissions and trouble-free passage through regional, district, and local levels of government. The fieldwork was supported by grants from National Science Foundation (BNS 8507859, BNS 8807436, DBS 9216088, SBR 9514214), and from UCLA Academic Senate Research Fund, and The Swan Fund. Another field visit was supported from a grant to Professor Peter Ladefoged to help him find some Hadza to collaborate in his phonetic studies. My 2000 visit was supported by funds raised by Annette Wagner to make her film of the Hadza.

Colleagues in UCLA Anthropology, Graduate School of Education, and Neuropsychiatric Institute were helpful, supportive, and informative in countless ways. I owe much to three outstanding collaborations at different stages in my career. Fae Hall, Mel Konner, and Kristen Hawkes have had profound and lasting influences on my thinking. I am grateful to Monique Borgerhoff Mulder for giving me the idea of a book, and to Nancy Howell and Kristen Hawkes for encouraging and helpful comments on a very early draft. Among my other good fortune has been a succession of great teachers and patrons, long gone but long remembered and to whom I am permanently grateful: Richard Schardt, Duncan Wood, David Vowles, Niko

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**xiv Preface and acknowledgments**

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Tinbergen, and Jim Tanner. Frank Marlowe, who, even if the dedication of his book implies a very inflated view of my ability as a teacher, was the only student who I instantly knew could handle fieldwork among the Hadza, although I failed at first to anticipate the great extent and success of his work in the years since 1995. Jim O'Connell's photographs from our 1985 to 1990 fieldwork have amazed and delighted me ever since his exhibition "Children of the Baobab". I wish we could include even more of them. At Cambridge University Press, I wish to thank Martin Griffiths, Katrina Halliday, Joanna Breeze, Victoria Parrin and Ilaria Tassistro for their encouragement and for guiding me through the intricacies of book production. I am grateful to Jeanette Mitchell of Traist Publishing Services for patient and thorough copy editing.

In Tanzania, David Bygott and Jeanette Hanby played several vital roles, especially after they settled in Mangola. Before each trip, they provided key information about conditions in Tanzania, ensured that our vehicle was up-and-running and available somewhere in Arusha. In Mangola, they allowed us to build our store shed near their house and readied a camp site and access to the clean water of the springs. All that in exchange for a few trinkets from the outside world, such as a bewildering array of teas that only the United States can offer. Residents of Karatu and Mangola provided friendship and frequent assistance. Thank you to Athumani, Paskali, Momwei Merus, Doctor Lyimo, Abdul Bariye, and Jovita Duko at Yaeda. They and several others helped us through a variety of adventures and misadventures. I still puzzle over how it was that everyone on the long chain of communication from the United States seemed to know that good news was on its way to me before I finally got the email with our oldest's crucial MLE results. Perhaps Jill had been trying to phone, normally a futile effort in those days. Officials at all levels of government were gracious and as helpful as the conditions under which they had to work allowed. Professor Chrys Kamuzora at University of Dar es Salaam Demography Unit helped immeasurably as our local contact, advising us through thick and thin. This project would not have happened without him.

Solo fieldwork is a peculiar exercise. Among the Hadza it was a mixture of sheer breathtaking magic, spells of total isolation from the outside world, and occasional exhaustion. In the Tanzania of last century, it began as a bewildering grind of toeing the line and serious tedium. We even had to go to Kenya for groceries. Gradually, everything began to work more smoothly in Tanzania, and by the end of my studies, I could reliably get through Dar es Salaam in exactly a week, and complete other preparations, buy supplies, and arrive in Mangola within another week. What kept me going in the hardest moments was the thought of my family back home. Half way through the project, Jill and I celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary. Except that, when we counted up my absences on fieldwork, we were two and a half years short. The lag is even greater now that we come within sight of our 50th. We seem to have been quite good at this "pair bonding" business and have had a wonderful life together. Younger readers need to constantly remind themselves that life goes by too fast. Looking back, it all seemed quite natural, even easy, although in Part Two of this book you will see how very poorly I understand how or why marriages work.

Jill managed to raise the children through and beyond their teenage years, and maintained her sanity despite all those seldom truly predictable absences (neither grants nor research permits were ever certain until the last minute). Furthermore, she has coped with the years of my retirement, during which I have worked at home well beyond normal commuter hours. Somehow we got away with raising three wonderful children, each successful in their chosen careers. With their wonderful partners, they have given us nine grandchildren. All arrived after my field days ended, and I have only once refused a visit on account of the book, even including visits to our itinerant daughter and her family in Finland and Czech Republic, two wonderful countries we would otherwise never have seen, and even to Moscow, home of the traffic jam and snow-bound playgrounds.

The grandchildren are the joy of our lives. If only the prospects of their Hadza age mates could be as good as theirs. Such contrasts are the great sting for the anthropologist. We exchange unsurpassable experiences, great colleagues, and absorbing puzzles about the bases of human nature for the first-hand knowledge that all is far from well with the world. Many anthropologists have established charities and attempted to work for the future of their study peoples. I have not. After a variety of efforts at the behest of various Hadza, I gave up. Even if one thinks one knows what the people want, for me the practical-political-personal obstacles proved overwhelming. The task is impossible for anyone not permanently resident in Tanzania. I can only wish good luck to those who try. In the case of the Hadza, their most enduring and effective support comes from the Dorobo Fund for Tanzania ([dorobofund.squarespace.com/hunter-gatherers](http://dorobofund.squarespace.com/hunter-gatherers)). In this book I attempt an in-depth analysis of its several topics, which leads to lengthy chapters. Some of the details are relegated to, some arguments expanded upon, and side issues explored in digital supplementary information, referenced in each chapter as, for example “SI 3.6” This material can be found at [www.cambridge.org/Hadza](http://www.cambridge.org/Hadza).

The Hadza deserve a good outcome. Their ceaseless energy and good spirits, in a setting of hardship and increasing adversity, is endlessly impressive. They are a lesson to us all, at many, many levels. I can give no quick prescriptions for their future, no recipes for the decision makers. My work has not been aimed in that direction. Nonetheless, I do share the belief that more knowledge can lead to better decisions. The book reports academic westerners’ questions about hunter-gatherers, and not just any academic but those of a particular school of thought, one that expects us humans to be highly opportunistic optimizers of our evolutionary fitness. It would be hard to think of a more “ivory tower” approach. However, here and there it does give insights that if we look humbly we can recognize in all of us humans.