

O povo que a humanidade ignorou!



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A pré-história começou pela recolecção e caça. A humanidade evoluiu. O progresso apagou as marcas do tempo. A inteligência humana reinventou o mundo. Mundo novo. Mas o progresso não matou os traços da ancestralidade. Bosquímanos, Sun do Kalahari e Pigmeus da África Central, com maior ou menor propensão mantêm seus hábitos. Fazem da natureza seu único e ideal habitat. Nomadismo. Caça e recolecção. Muito poucas pessoas terão ouvido falar do grupo étnico Hadzabe, eventualmente a tribo mais primitiva do planeta. E mais desconhecida. Em 1978 eram menos de mil. Vivem como a humanidade os fez há milhões de anos. Pré-história. Desconhecidos pelo mundo e até pouco conhecidos no seu país. Como foi que o mundo os renegou?

Os Hadzabe constituem um dos vários grupos étnicos da Tanzânia, país irmão, berço de lutas de libertação no sul do continente africano. Vivem no nordeste, província de Manyara. A região é famosa pela abundante fauna selvagem. Pelos parques nacionais. Tarangire, Manyara e a zona de conservação de Ngorongoro (cratera), e ainda as planícies do Serengueti. Mas é junto ao lago Eyasi que as últimas bolsas dos Hadzabe podem, ainda, ser encontradas. Bem próximo deste local, antropólogos britânicos, nos anos 60, descobriram fósseis de hominídeos que, de alguma maneira, comprovam as teorias sobre a África como berço da humanidade.

Ouvi falar nos Hazabe, pela primeira vez, em 2004.

Estudantes do Colégio de Mweka falaram neles com misto de angústia, frustração e honra. Falaram da ancestralidade e pré-história que os tipificava. Um povo que se recusara à civilização, uma tribo que poderia sucumbir.

Caçadores e recolectores natos, os Hadzabe sobrevivem de frutos silvestres, de mel e de carne de caça. Para eles o mundo foi criado pelo Sol e pela Lua. O Sol permite que eles localizem suas presas. A Lua, que os ajuda a sonhar e a dar-lhes sorte na caçada.

A caça é uma actividade essencialmente masculina. Caçam de tudo, mamíferos de grande, médio e pequeno porte. Caçam, sem piedade, outros predadores. Nada escapa! Tanta ferocidade daria para entender

como o ser humano se transformou no maior e mais temível predador do planeta. A par da caça colectam mel. Os Hadzabe sobem árvores para tirar mel ou caçar com a mesma mestria e facilidade com que qualquer primata o faria. As mulheres, para além de cuidarem dos filhos, são exímias a escavar raízes. Destas escavações retiram as calorias que os homens não conseguem trazer. Qualquer roedor teria inveja de as ver escavar e retirar das entranhas da terra as raízes do sustento. Todas as relações giram à volta da comida. Quando esta abunda, eles passam horas devorando, sem qualquer outra preocupação, tudo que a mãe natureza generosamente oferece. Vida feita de comer e comer. Pessoas de invejável e tremendo apetite.



O grupo de caçadores seguirá os rastros. Contam com a orientação dos abutres. A carne envenenada não constituirá perigo para seu consumo. O fogo, feito à mão e na hora, reduz a vitalidade do veneno e satisfaz o apetite do caçador.

Os Hadzabe são exímios conhecedores de plantas. As plantas são farmácias a céu aberto. Curam todo e mais algum sintoma. Na verdade, não consomem vegetais. Djequera Dufu, ele próprio, foi atacado de surpresa por um búfalo. De fractura exposta na perna direita, garante que as plantas o curaram. Mesmo a malária, que dizima milhões em sociedades civilizadas, parece não fazer vítimas entre os Hadzabe.

Amantes incondicionais da liberdade, os Hadzabe partilham tudo dentro do seu grupo. Viajam em grupos de quatro a cinco famílias. Nem parece. Para além de parentes consanguíneos, os grupos hospedam jovens caçadores de outras

famílias. Acreditam em amuletos. Absolutamente todos usam colares e são vacinados para se prevenirem das mordeduras de cobras e de outros animais. Não existem, porém, doutrinas ou religiões no seu seio. Sol e Lua. Vento. Quando venta não se pode caçar. Os cheiros e odores são perceptíveis pela presa.

Nem mesmo as relações matrimoniais são efémeras. Os Hadzabe respeitam suas famílias mas não se prendem à mesma mulher quando acham que atingiram níveis de saturação. Quando a primeira mulher envelhece é substituída por uma mais nova. Duas mulheres em simultâneo é raro. Difícil de gerir. Mas acontece.

O contacto ocasional com outros grupos étnicos colocou-os próximo do álcool e tabaco comercial. Álcool e cigarro converteram-se em presentes de luxo. Assim são feitas as aproximações. Novas amizades. Hadzabe, como família, alucinados tentam compreender o dito

mundo. Consomem o quanto seus corpos toleram.

Porque razão os Hadzabe terão sido, aparentemente, esquecidos pela humanidade? Porque seu desenvolvimento não acompanhou a civilização e outras etnias? Não deve existir resposta. Não foi vontade divina.

Assume-se que, pelo facto de viverem em zonas infestadas pela mosca tsé-tsé, próximo dos parques nacionais, foi evitado o estabelecimento de comunidades sedentárias, de pastores ou agricultores. A abundância de carne de caça, nesses parques bem preservados, manteve níveis de dieta e conforto razoáveis. O sentido de liberdade e independência de sistemas também pode ser equacionado. A política de tolerância ilimitada dos tanzanianos, nas relações inter-tribais, também facilitou a permanência na selva.

O ideal de qualquer Hadzabe é a caça. Virar caçador. Aprender todas as técnicas de seus

progenitores. Isso só se aprende na selva. O presidente Kikwete, à semelhança de Nyerere, quer alterar a situação. Sabe-se de antemão que o recurso à força não surtirá efeito. Terão que ser usados incentivos diferentes. Algumas crianças Hadzabe estão sendo levadas para a escola. Pode ser um primeiro passo.

Afinal esta mudança terá de ocorrer. Os cenários mudaram. Com o aumento da população aumenta a pressão sobre o espaço vital dos Hadzabe. Interação, mesmo sem querer, mais frequentemente com outras tribos. Mas o mundo precisa de fazer muito mais pelos Hadzabe. Seus números reduzem-se a olhos vistos. Podem mesmo estar em vias de extinção. Os paradoxos do mundo e da civilização encontram nos Hadzabe campo fértil para os questionamentos. Como pode a humanidade ir para Marte e para Lua, fazer cirurgias laser, viver na luxúria e esquecer-se, bem do seu lado, que outro ser humano é pré-histórico? ■



A people forsaken by humanity!

Prehistory began with gathering and hunting. Humanity evolved. Progress erased the traces of time. Human intelligence reinvented the world. A new world. But progress has not wiped out the traces of ancestry: the Bushmen, the Sun of the Kalahari and the Pygmies of Central Africa. To a higher or lesser degree, they have preserved their customs. Nature is their only and ideal habitat. A nomadic way of life. Hunting and gathering. Very few people have heard of the Hadza ethnic group, arguably the most primitive tribe on the planet and the most unknown. In 1978, there were a little less than 1000 of them. They live as humanity had made them millions of years ago. Prehistory. Unknown to the world, and even hardly known in their own country. How did the world disown them?

The Hadza are one of the various ethnic groups in Tanzania, a brotherly country, the cradle of the liberation struggle in the South of the African continent. The Hadza live in Northeast Tanzania, in the Manyara province. The region is famous for its abundance of wildlife and national parks: Tarangire, Manyara, the conservation area of Ngorongoro (crater) and also the plains of the Serengeti. But it is close to Lake Eyasi where we can find the last pockets inhabited by the Hadza people. Very close to this location, in the 60s, British anthropologists discovered hominid fossils that somehow corroborate the theories that Africa is the cradle of humanity.

I heard about the Hadza people for the first time in 2004. Students from the Mweka College spoke about them with a mixture of distress, frustration

and honour. They spoke about the ancestry and prehistory that typifies them. Of a people that had refused civilisation. A tribe endangered.

Innate hunters and gatherers, the Hadza survive on wild fruit, honey and game meat. They believe that the world was created by the Sun and the Moon. The Sun enables them to locate their prey. The Moon helps them dream and provides them with luck in hunting.

Hunting is essentially a male activity. They hunt everything, from large to medium and small mammals. They hunt pitilessly other predators. Nothing escapes! Such ferociousness explains how humans became the biggest and most fearsome predators on the planet. In addition to hunting, they collect honey. The Hadza climb trees to collect honey or to hunt with the same mastery and ease of a primate. Women, besides caring for their children, are experts

at digging roots which provide them with the calories that their men cannot get. They would inspire envy from any rodent that sees them digging and taking out the entrails from the soil, the roots of subsistence. All social relations revolve around food. When it is abundant, they spend hours devouring it with no other worries, all that Mother Nature so generously offers. Here life consists of eating and eating. They are a people with an enviable and tremendous appetite.

They are of short stature when compared to average people, their skin darkened by the compulsory sunbathing, their bodies slender. It is impossible to descry reserves of calories or fat between their scarce clothing. As nomads, they live in the midst of the wilderness without any houses, huts or shelter; only with the shade from the trees. During the rainy season they take refuge in caves. Without any belongings, their sparing

possessions always travel with them. Scraps of iron, a stone to sharpen spears and many giraffe tendons from which they make bows. Arrows and bows are their identity cards.

With the help of the Mweka College's students and professors I managed to establish contact with the Hadza people. It was a long and toilsome conversation, sometimes through direct translation to Swahili, other times just in Kidzabe, their language, to none other. We talked about how the late President Nyerere had ordered the construction of houses for the Hadza in a futile attempt to persuade them to change their life and customs. Mwalimo Nyerere wanted to bring them back to the world at any cost, without ever forcing them to do so. They stayed in these houses only when there was food. As soon as it was finished, they went on their way and never returned. Tanzania had failed





in its mission. It had been a different story with the Maasai, a tribe well known for its semi-nomadic lifestyle, shepherding and the ability with which they raise thousands of heads of cattle.

Kidzabe is their language, said to be extremely difficult to speak. It is based on clicks and snaps, mimicking and whistling. All associated with survival and the economy. Hunting. It is assumed that a human being can reproduce approximately 153 different sounds in practically all known languages. The Hadza, alone, master around 145 distinct sounds. Kidzabe imitates animal and bird sounds, all in order to confuse and not frighten the prey away. Mimicking is the order of command. There are similarities between the languages of Bushmen and the Sun. As a matter of fact, DNA tests have proven genetic similarities. It is therefore not surprising that these tribes are intrinsically related. Nor is it surprising that hunting has shaped human language.

I asked brothers Djequera and Sariboco Dufu how they dealt with death. Where did they bury the bodies? The Hadza do not believe in the afterlife. Life comes to an end. Once the bodies have been covered with leaves, the Hadza will go hunting. The hunted game will be placed next to the dead person whose smell attracts the hyenas in no time. These voracious predators then take it upon themselves to finish off the game

and the human body. Here is death generating and sustaining life. Such is the reason why the hyena is the only animal that is not hunted by the Hadza.

We talked about hunting techniques. About the poison they put on the tips of their spears. Poison extracted from plants. All it takes then, they explained, is for the spear to hit the prey. The severity of the blow is not important. The animal dies within a few minutes. The hunting party then follows its tracks. They rely on the vultures to show them the way. The poisoned meat is not dangerous for eating. Fire, started by hand and on time, reduces the poison's power. Thus the meat satisfies the hunter's appetite.

The Hadza are great connoisseurs of plants which are open-air pharmacies, curing every possible symptom. In fact, they do not eat vegetables. Djequera Dufu was himself unexpectedly attacked by a buffalo. Injured with an open fracture on his right leg, he's absolutely sure that plants did cure him. Even malaria, which causes the death of millions in civilised societies, seems not to make victims among the Hadza.

Unconditional lovers of freedom, the Hadza share everything within their group. They travel in groups of four to five families. In addition to blood relatives, the groups accommodate young hunters from other families. They believe in talismans. They absolutely all wear necklaces

and are vaccinated to protect themselves from snake bites and other animals. However, they have no doctrines or religions. Rather, the Sun, the Moon and the Wind. When the wind blows, hunting is impossible. Smells and odours are noticed by the prey.

Even marital relations are ephemeral. The Hadza respect their families but they do not bind themselves to the same woman when they think they have reached levels of saturation. When the first wife grows old she is replaced by a younger one. Having two women at the same time is rare. It is hard to manage. But it does happen.

Occasional contact with other ethnic groups has acquainted them with commercial alcohol and tobacco, which have become luxury gifts. That is how approaches, new friendships, are made. As a family, allucinated, the Hadza try to understand the world. They eat and drink as much as their bodies can take.

Why have the Hadza apparently been forgotten by humanity? Why their development did not follow civilisation and other ethnicities? Isn't there some answer? It was not God's will.

It is presumed that because they lived in areas infested with the tsetse fly, close to national parks, the establishment of sedentary, cattle-raising and agricultural communities came to be prevented. The abundance of game meat in these well-preserved

parks sustained reasonable levels of diet and comfort. The sense of freedom and independence from outer systems can also be taken into account. The policy of unlimited tolerance by the Tanzanians as regards inter-tribal relations also made it easier for them to stay in the wild.

The ideal of every Hadza is hunting, to become a hunter, to learn all of his forefathers' techniques. This can only be achieved in the wilderness. Like Nyerere, President Kikwete wants to change the situation. It is clear beforehand that the use of force will not bear fruit. Different incentives will have to be used. Some Hadza children are being sent to schools. That could be a first step.

After all, this change will have to happen. The rules have changed. As the population increases, so does the pressure on the Hadza's vital space. They interact more frequently with other tribes even though they do not want it. However, the world needs to do much more for the Hadza. Their numbers are diminishing before our own eyes. They may truly be on the verge of extinction. The paradoxes of the world and civilisation find in the Hadza fertile soil for questioning. How can Man go to Mars and land on the Moon, perform laser surgeries, lead a lavish life and forget that another human being, right next to him, still lives in prehistory? ■