

# Hyaena: On The Naming And Localisation Of An Enigmatic Animal - Holger Funk

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**Abstract**The habitat of the four extant hyena species covers all of Africa and large parts of Asia. Hyenas living in this enormous area have been described by local and western observers for more than 2000 years. Many names have been given to the hyenas in the wide range of languages in which they have been described and several legends and wrong ideas about hyenas have also been spread. In the present study we want to retrace how the wrong perceptions about the hyena, the 'histoires absurdes' as Comte de Buffon has called them, developed and how they were overcome by several scholars in a protracted process. Due to their research work we know today that the mysterious animal 'hyaena' comprises four species which together build up the Hyaenidae family. We will start by introducing these species shortly (chap. 2). Thereafter we return to the beginning of the hyena history and outline the classical Greco-Roman reports on the hyena and how until the Renaissance and beyond these modelled the occidental perceptions of this animal (chap. 3). Then we examine how the single members of the Hyaenidae family were discovered, described and named by later naturalists and zoologists. In chronological order these were the striped hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*), the spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*), the brown hyena (*Parahyaena brunnea*) and finally the aardwolf (*Proteles cristatus*) (chap. 4 and 5). Special attention is paid to the first zoological description of the striped hyena by the traveller and naturalist Engelbert Kaempfer from the end of the 17th century. The value of this widely unknown report lies in the fact that it actually made the breakthrough to overcome the confused and puzzling ideas about the hyena which had prevailed up to that time (chap. 4). We conclude our survey with a chapter on 'imaginary' hyenas in which we deal with animals that have been mistaken for real hyenas. In one of these cases the imagined hyena was apparently nothing but a fantasy creature, comprising nevertheless characteristic traits of two real hyena species (chap. 6). The descriptions of the discovery, naming and localisation of the hyena species are followed by two appendices which contain extensive original source texts (some of which are available in translation for the first time) and pictorial material. Author: Funk, Holger Publisher: GRIN Verlag Illustration: N Language: ENG Title: Hyaena: On the naming and

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