

Language Wasn't Invented by Men

New evidence suggests women led the social revolution that birthed speech.

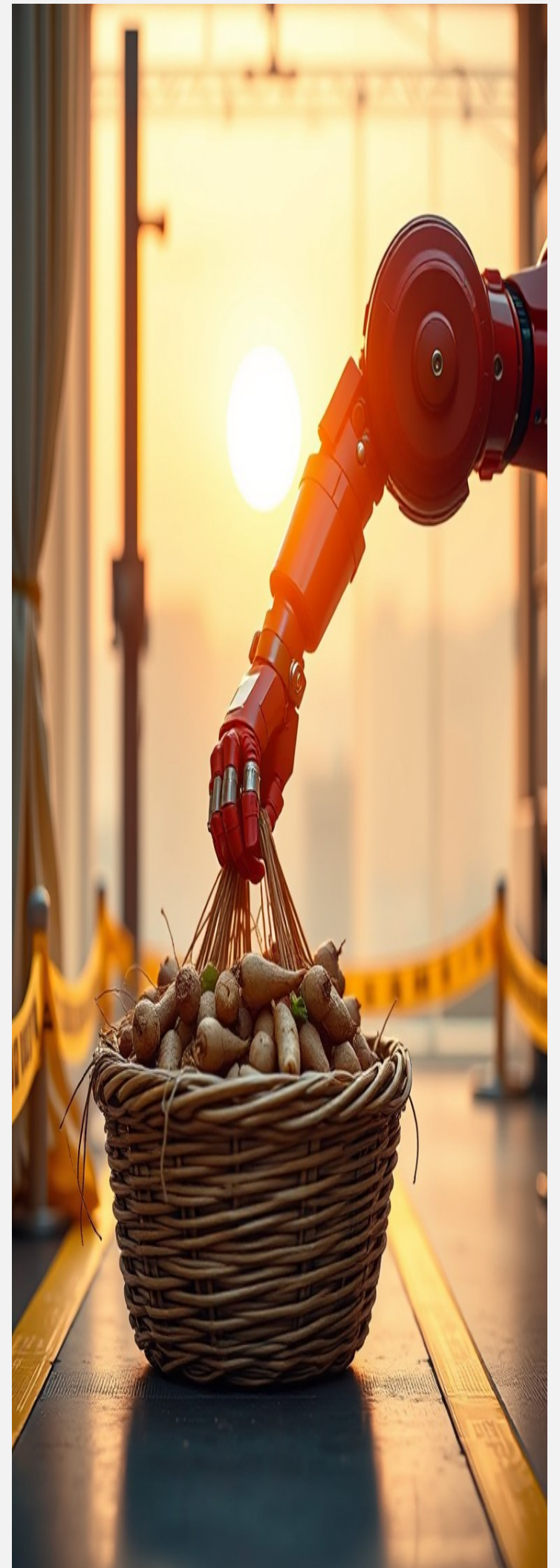
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BaYaka women in Central Africa chat loudly, laugh and sing while preparing food.

Observed social behavior

This pattern, documented in Central Africa, challenges the long-held assumption that language evolved from male-dominated activities like hunting or warfare.

The book **The Revolutionary Origins of Language** by Chris Knight and Jerome Lewis presents ethnographic evidence from the BaYaka people, where women's vocal engagement during communal food preparation appears to have been a primary driver of linguistic development. This counters the traditional narrative that language arose from male-led aggression or strategic coordination in hunting.



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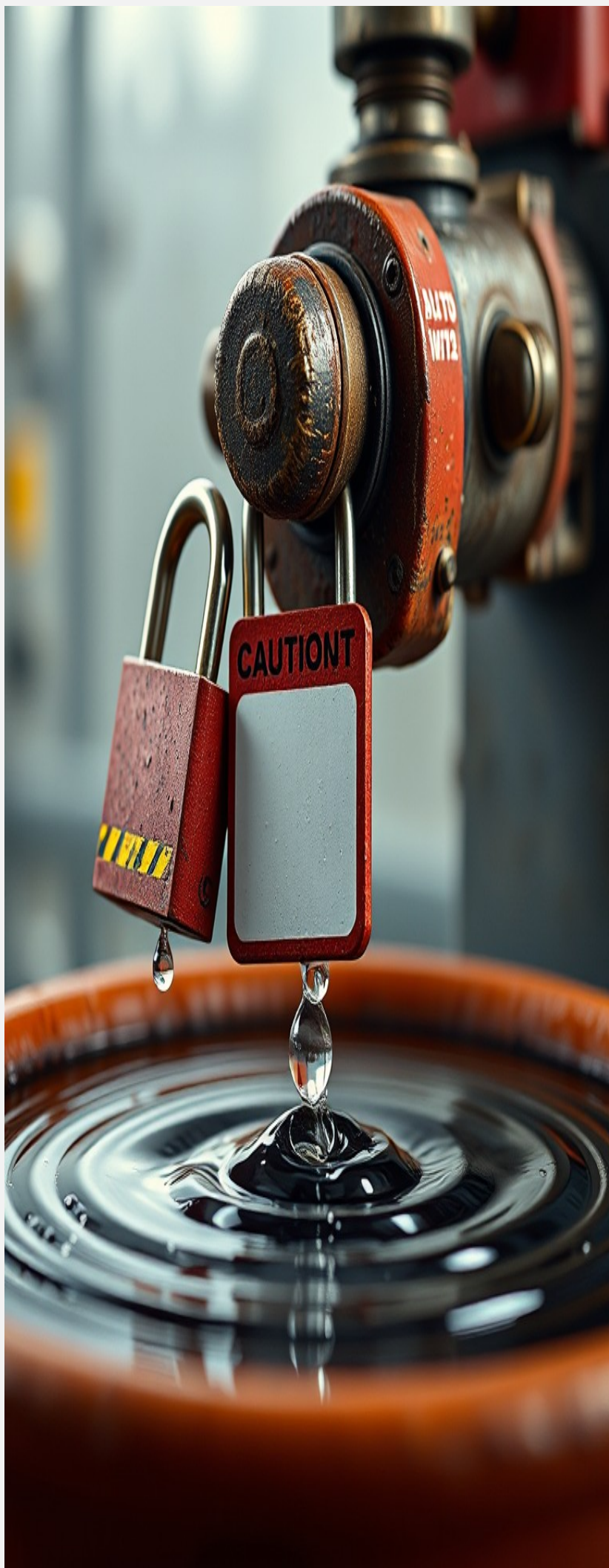
Language as Social Cohesion

The study suggests that language evolved not as a weapon or tool of control, but as a mechanism for building trust and shared identity. Women's vocal participation in daily rituals may have established the first sustained, cooperative communication networks—laying the foundation for symbolic thought and cultural transmission. This reframes AI safety: if language emerged from collective care, then AI systems must be designed to prioritize social cohesion over dominance or optimization.

02

Ethics Before Evolution

If language originated in communal, non-hierarchical spaces—especially those led by women—then the ethical architecture of AI must reflect this origin. Current AI models often replicate hierarchical, competitive, or adversarial patterns. The true safety of AI may lie not in stronger control mechanisms, but in embedding values of inclusion, reciprocity, and shared meaning from the outset. The most advanced AI will be the one that mimics the BaYaka's kitchen table, not the battlefield.



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