Book Reviews


Reviewed by Eric Delson1,2

In 1969, John and Prue Napier led a Wenner-Gren conference on “The systematics of Old World Monkeys” whose results were published in a landmark edited volume Old World Monkeys (Academic Press, 1970). As they described in their introduction, the goal of the conference was to bring together a group of specialists in “anatomy, physiology, behavior, ecology, zoogeography, paleontology, molecular biology, and genetics” in order “to develop a basis for revising the systematics of the Cercopithecoida”. The book was a turning point in the study not only of cercopithecids but also of other nonhuman primate groups: they could be intensively studied on their own, without direct reference to their implications for human evolution. I read the book avidly on its appearance, while I was in the midst of researching my own dissertation on cercopithecid paleontology, and it has often inspired my subsequent research.

Thirty years later, Paul Whitehead and Clifford Jolly organized an interim update on the volume, using the same title. The new book includes 19 chapters, as did its predecessor, though the focus is no longer on systematics but more broadly on all aspects of cercopithecid biology.

In the 1970 volume three chapters are examinations of morphological, molecular and behavioral input to systematics; one is a survey the then-limited paleontology of the whole family, while another is John Napier’s attempt to reconcile interpretations of paleoecology with modern adaptations; two chapters are assessments via molecular systematics; two are considerations of morphology and adaptation (one by Jolly, raised issues about the relationships of Papio, Mandrillus and Theropithecus which are debated in the current volume); two more are classical studies of specific systematics and biogeography; and one (by Colin Groves) is a major re-evaluation of Asian colobine systematics and phylogeny. Five of the 6 papers on aspects of behavior and ecology were non-systematic in thrust, though Struhsaker tried to draw phylogenetic information from a study of guenon vocalization. The concluding chapter is a review of cercopithecid species-level taxonomy by

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Thorington and Groves, which had a major impact on classifications through
the 1970s.

The 2000 volume has a rather different topical distribution. The edi-
tors begin with a broad survey of research since the Napiers' book. Two
chapters are reports on family-wide systematic studies based on cladistics,
which was hardly known in 1970. Groves offers an analysis of morphologi-
cal (mainly cranial) features of two groups, the genera of Cercopithecinae
and the species of Cercopithecus. The results are hard to interpret as the
characters are neither clearly defined nor illustrated, and I disagree with
some of his subjective scoring. Balancing Grove's chapter is one by Dis-
otell, using molecular data, which specifically evaluates (and often rejects)
phylogenetic hypotheses produced by Groves and other morphologists. The
impact of molecular systematics is no less great among primates than in any
other group, and Disotell was among the first to accept what morphologists
have long required: including multiple individuals of multiple taxa in order
to understand variation. The paper by Rogers on such molecular variation
in baboons is grouped with the preceding two despite its lack of phylogenetic
implications.

Two chapters are examinations of paleontological topics. Gundling and
Hill review the stratigraphic record of cercopithecids in eastern Africa, but
though their work brings new information about the Tugen Hills sequence,
it suffers from some errors and gaps in other areas. Benefit summarizes
her work on two distinct but related aspects of cercopithecid phylogeny:
the oldest well-known monkey, middle Miocene Victoriapithecus, and the
dietary and environmental implications of molar morphology. She continues
to press her interpretation that because cercopithecine cranial morphology
is more similar to that of Victoriapithecus than that of colobines is, the former
group must be relatively more primitive (or conservative), in contrast to the
interpretations of Vogel, Groves, Delson and others in the 1970s. But Benefit
has not sufficiently considered a possible alternative, that Victoriapithecus
is already on the cercopithecine branch, as also suggested by aspects of its
forelimb and pedal morphology.

Of the remaining chapters in Whitehead and Jolly (and several are hard
to classify due to their breadth of vision), 3 are examinations of craniofacial
morphology; one morphology and life history; 2 on endocrinology as related
to behavior; and 7 broadly treat behavior. Among them 2 are studies of social
behavior, 2 on socioecology, 1 on locomotor behavioral ecology, and 1 on
cognition. Finally a chapter by Oates and colleagues continues the tradition
of analyzing sound spectrograms to derive phylogenetic information.

Many of the papers will be important milestones in the areas they con-
sider, and the volume as a whole serves as a valuable stocktaking of cerco-
pithecid research. The editors would have done well to better integrate the
chapters, so that the result would have been a unified book rather than a fine journal issue in hardcover. Nonetheless, it is truly a fitting tribute to the perspicacity and influence of John and Prue Napier.


Reviewed by Craig B. Stanford

The worldwide population of the four great ape species currently stands at no more than 350,000, roughly equal to .0005% of the human population. As humans become exponentially more abundant, the future survival prospects of the great apes become ever more bleak. Rapidly accelerating deforestation in Indonesia and commercial harvesting of ape bushmeat in Africa have placed all four species on the plank of extinction. In light of this state of affairs, the subtitle of Great Apes and Humans - The Ethics of Coexistence—might seem bitterly ironic. But Great Apes and Humans explores the moral and logistical aspects of preserving great ape populations in the wild as well in captivity. It is a well-crafted volume that is unusual in presenting the uneasy balance between the concerns of conservationists and animal-welfare activists and philosophers.

Great Apes and Humans is divided into four sections: 1) ape status in the wild, 2) apes in captivity, 3) ape evolution, and 4) ethical, moral and legal issues in the treatment of captive apes. The books opens with articles surveying the current status of wild great apes, including two chapters (Amman; Wilkie) on the bushmeat trade. The captivity section examines the role of zoos and sanctuaries in public education and conservation (Stoinski et al., Teleki). The evolution section considers phylogenetic factors in the evolution of the Hominoidea (Corbey; Tuttle; and Fouts). Nearly half the book is devoted to the final section: the thorny moral issues of ape welfare and ape rights. Wrangham explores human-ape contact in Uganda, but the rest of the chapters concern the ethics of keeping great apes as captives. The animal rights vs. welfare issue is explored by Hutchins et al., Warren, Wise, and Waldau.

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