

The nomenclature of the Tanzanian Mangabey and the Siberut Macaque

Colin Groves

Department of Archaeology & Anthropology
Australian National University
Canberra, ACT 0200
Australia

Introduction: rules of nomenclature

The *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* exists to make biologists' lives a little easier: "to promote stability and universality in the scientific names of animals and to ensure that the name of each taxon is unique and distinct" (Preamble to 3rd edition, 1985). In theory, if a taxonomist decides that a particular species, subspecies or whatever is distinct, he or she can go to some listing of names and find if it has been described before, or needs a new name. The name of a taxon must be *valid* (distinct from every other), and the name must be *available* (useable).

Names of species and subspecies ("names of the species-group") are interchangeable; for example, if a subspecies is raised to species rank, its specific name stays the same, merely becoming part of a two-word combination instead of a three-word one. If a species or subspecies is transferred to a different genus, the specific name again stays the same, merely being now part of a different two- (or three-) word combination.

To be available, a name of the species group must satisfy the provisions of the *Code*, Articles 10 to 20. These amount to the following:

- it must have been published;
- it must have been used as a scientific name by the author when published;
- it must have been published as a binomen, i.e. as a species or a subspecies;
- it must have been treated as valid when proposed;
- it must have been accompanied by some indication purporting to define the taxon which it denotes, or a bibliographic reference to such an indication.

Note that, although taxonomists are enjoined to nominate a type specimen (to which the name is thereafter indissolubly attached) for every new species or subspecies they describe, it is not a requirement of the present *Code*. A name can be available even if the taxon it denotes does not have an individual name-bearing specimen (Holotype). In the absence of a holotype all the specimens included by the author when naming the taxon are Syntypes (Article 73b), and a Lectotype may be selected from amongst them (Article 74).

It sometimes happens that researchers may feel that a particular population represents a valid taxon that has not yet been formally described and named, but for whatever reason does not feel able to describe and name it themselves. If this happens, their colleagues try to tiptoe around the putative taxon, repeating its defining characteristics but avoiding giving it a name at all costs, for to do so might be a breach of ethics. Yet somehow a name comes out of the woodwork and the problem then is for other workers to avoid using it in a way that might make it available. With the best will in the world this strategy eventually fails, and some well-meaning individual does the wrong thing, and finds him- or herself responsible for the formal naming of a taxon which really "belongs" to someone else. There are two recent examples of this in Primates.

The Tanzanian Mangabey

Homewood and Rodgers (1981) alerted the scientific world to the presence of mangabeys (genus *Cercocebus*) in the Mwanihana Forest Reserve, on the eastern side of the Uzungwa Mountains in southern Tanzania. They observed one large troop in the field at Sanje Falls, and were able to examine a juvenile male, 4 to 6 months old, in captivity in Arusha. The captive individual is, I understand, still alive.

The Sanje Mangabey, as they called it, was clearly part of the *C.galeritus* group of Central Africa and the Tana River, Kenya, which Homewood & Rodgers regarded as conspecific. They gave quite a detailed description, differentiating it from others of the group, describing external appearance as well as vocalisations and some brief observations on social behaviour.

As a taxon of restricted distribution and low total population, the Sanje Mangabey was bound to be discussed in the conservation literature. The first mention that I can trace is Wasser (1985), who did not describe it nor even refer to Homewood & Rodgers' paper, but in this paper insensibly, presumably inadvertently, "Sanje Mangabey" became *Cercocebus galeritus sanjei*. A name published like this, without a description or bibliographic reference to one, is called a *nomen nudum* and is unavailable.

The next mention of the Sanje Mangabey in the literature is by Mittermeier (1986). In Table 1 of this paper appears the following:

Cercocebus galeritus sanjei - Uzungwa Mts, Tanzania - Comments: a recently discovered subspecies quite restricted in range (Homewood & Rodgers, 1981).

The Homewood & Rodgers citation is correctly entered in the References list at the end of the paper. Consequently the requirements of the Code are met, and the name *sanjei* becomes available. It seems evident that Wasser's (1985) inadvertent transposition of the vernacular "Sanje" to the latinised "*sanjei*" had misled Mittermeier (1986) into thinking that this was a properly constituted scientific name, and he in turn giving the bibliographic reference made it available. The correct citation of the name is therefore:

Cercocebus galeritus sanjei Mittermeier, 1986

The Siberut Macaque

Wilson & Wilson (1977) argued that the macaque of the Mentawai Islands, west of Sumatra, formerly classified as *Macaca nemestrina pagensis*, would better be regarded as a distinct species, *M.pagensis*. The Mentawai group include four main islands: North and South Pagai, Sipora and Siberut. On the basis of field observations, Whitten & Whitten (1982) suggested that the macaques of Siberut could be subspecifically different from those of South Pagai, whence all museum specimens originated. Having no voucher specimens they refrained from awarding a name, although they strongly suspected that a live specimen of unknown origin in Bristol Zoo and a skin in the Natural History Museum, London (imported from Padang, on the Sumatran mainland opposite Siberut), belonged to the Siberut form.

Recently, Fuentes & Olson (1995), reporting the first field observations of macaques on North Pagai, wrote:

There appear to be two subspecies: *M.p.pagensis* (Miller, 1903), of the Pagais and Sipora, and *M.p.siberu* (Wilson & Wilson, 1976 [sic]; Whitten & Whitten, 1982), found on the northern island of Siberut. Whitten & Whitten (1982) describe the morphological differences between the two subspecies...

It is unclear whether Fuentes & Olson (1995) realised that they were creating a new name. Two

of the Mentawai primates, *Presbytis potenzi* and *Nasalis (=Simias) concolor*, show subspecific variation, and each has a subspecies called *siberu*; it may be that there was simple confusion here. At any rate, their name meets the requirements of the Code, and is available. The correct citation of the name is therefore:

M[acaca] p[agensis] siberu Fuentes & Olson, 1995

Postscript

In palmier days it was rightly considered unwise to describe new taxa - especially subspecies, which after all differ from other subspecies by majority-rule rather than absolutely - on the basis of single specimens. But we live in the age of diminishing biodiversity, when conservation imperatives are overwhelming. This alters matters in two respects. First, it is desirable for conservation reasons that distinguishable taxa be named. Secondly, small samples - even unique specimens - may be all that one is ever going to get. The understandable reluctance of researchers to name a new taxon on very limited material has to be modulated in the light of these concerns; as long as they really are sure, on the balance of evidence, that the taxon really is new, it is better that the discoverers should be the ones to name it, rather than that it enter the literature unnamed, to be inadvertently given its name by others later on.

It is not even (as of the 1985 Code) essential that there be a type specimen. It is, however, clearly desirable, so I hereby designate as lectotype of *Cercocebus galeritus sanjei* the male living at the Mount Meru Game Sanctuary, Arusha, figured and described in detail by Homewood & Rodgers (1981:50-51, Fig.1). By implication, these authors' description was very largely based on this specimen, and no example of the taxon is known to be preserved in any museum collection. I wish this mangabey health, happiness and long life, but is vital that its remains be preserved after its demise.

For *Macaca pagensis siberu* a museum specimen (BM 33.11.9.1, skin, skull and skeleton) is identified with this taxon by Whitten & Whitten (1982). This animal was from London Zoo, and was originally imported from Padang, Sumatra, but in the absence of a firm indication that it actually was from Siberut, plausible though this may be, I feel that it is unsuitable for designation as a type.

Acknowledgments

I am most grateful to Mr Jeremy Smith (Scientific Administrator) and Dr Philip Tubbs (Executive Secretary) of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature for reading an earlier draft of this paper, and for their suggestions and encouragement.

References Cited

- Fuentes, A. & M.Olson. 1995. Preliminary observations and status of the Pagai macaque. *Asian Primates*, 4, no.4:1-4.
- Homewood, K.M. & W.A.Rodgers. 1981. A previously undescribed mangabey from Southern Tanzania. *Int.J.Primatol.* 2:47-55.
- International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*, 3rd edition. 1985. Adopted by the XX General Assembly of the International Union of Biological Sciences.
- Mittermeier, R.A. 1986. A global overview of primate conservation. Pp 325-340 in *Primate Ecology and Conservation* (J.G.Else & P.C.Lee, eds.). Cambridge University Press.
- Wasser, S.K. 1985. Current conservation status of the Mwanihana Rain Forest, Uzungwa Mountains, Sanje, Tanzania. *Primate Conservation*, No.6:34.

Whitten, A.J. & J.E.J. Whitten. 1982. Preliminary observations of the Mentawai Macaque on Siberut Island, Indonesia. *Int.J.Primatol.* 3:445-459.

Wilson, C.C. & W.L. Wilson. 1977. Behavioral and morphological variation among Primate populations in Sumatra. *Ybk.Phys.Anthrop.* 20:207-233.

**XVth ANNUAL CONFERENCE
OF
AUSTRALIAN PRIMATE SOCIETY
6-8 December 1996**

Theme

Zoos as a resource for non-invasive behavioural research

Venue

**WELLINGTON ZOO
WELLINGTON
NEW ZEALAND**

The XVth Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Australian Primate Society will be held on 6-8 December 1996. The Conference will include presentations of papers on the theme of **Zoos as a resource for non-invasive behavioural research**. Papers on other aspects of primate management, husbandry, biology and conservation will also be presented.

The Conference will commence on Friday 6 December at 7.30pm in the Archibald Centre at the Zoo. **Professor Arnold Chamove**, Dept of Psychology at Massey University, will present the keynote address entitled

How do we decide what works?

Interesting and innovative ways of evaluating what we do for animals.

Supper will be provided.

On Saturday evening at 7.00pm there will be a conference dinner in the Princess Star Room at the Airport Hotel. Buffet menu selected and the cost of \$NZ32.50 is to be paid at the time of registration.

Registration Costs

Members	\$Aus25.00
Non-Members	\$Aus60.00
One-Day	\$Aus30.00