Further Information on Neotropical Monkeys in the XVI Century: Part 3

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FURTHER INFORMATION ON NEOTROPICAL MONKEYS IN THE XVI CENTURY: PART 3

**Bernardo Urbani**

Here, I report on further descriptions and mentions of Neotropical monkeys when Europe first began its colonization of the New World. In 1498, Christopher Columbus (hereafter referred to as C. Colón) landed on the island of Trinidad, four days before stepping foot on continental America in Paria, Venezuela. Hernando Colón (1488–1539), son of the admiral of Genoa, wrote a chronicle about the travels of his father, including the day he first visited Trinidad. H. Colón indicated in his posthumous work (1571) that “in the point named Galea [currently known as Galeota Point, southeastern Trinidad]… They found many animal footprints that looked like goats, and also bones from one, but, since the head did not have horns, they believed it was a gato patol, or monkey, later they knew that it was, since they saw many gatos paties in Paria. That same day, August first [1498], sailing between Cape Galea and Cape Playa, to starboard, to the South, we saw Tierra Firme…” (H. Colón 1932: 132). As in the report of C. Colón about primates in Paria (Colón 1996, Urbani 1999), this mention not only refers to the first observation of remains alleged to be a monkey on the island of Trinidad (probably *Cebus albifrons trinitati* or *Alouatta macconnelli*), but also remarks on monkeys on the continent (*A. arctoidea* or *C. olivaceus*) seen by C. Colón a few days later in northeastern Venezuela.

Regarding the first report about monkeys on *terra firma* written by C. Colón in 1498 (Colón 1996, Urbani 1999), Pedro Martir de Anglería (1457–1526) added further information in 1500 indicating that “Another very singular thing the Admiral [C. Colón] has told me, and which is confirmed by his companions (all worthy of credence and whom I carefully questioned concerning the details of the voyage), is that he sailed twenty-six leagues, that is to say, one hundred and forty-eight miles, in fresh water; and the farther he advanced to the west, the fresher the water...” (H. Colón 1932: 132). As in the report of C. Colón about primates in Paria (Colón 1996, Urbani 1999), this mention not only refers to the first observation of remains alleged to be a monkey on the island of Trinidad (probably *Cebus albifrons trinitati* or *Alouatta macconnelli*), but also remarks on monkeys on the continent (*A. arctoidea* or *C. olivaceus*) seen by C. Colón a few days later in northeastern Venezuela.

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became. Finally, he saw a very lofty mountain, of which the eastern part was inhabited only by a multitude of monkeys with very long tails. All this side of the mountain is very steep, which explains why no people live there… It was learned by signs that that country was called Paria, that it was very extensive…” (Anglería 1912: 75). P. M. de Anglería also indicated that in the regions of Curiana and Cauchieta, in today’s Venezuela where the Peninsula of Paria is located, “The Spaniards brought away some very pretty monkeys and a number of parrots of varied colors, from that country” (Anglería 1912: 85). This seems to be the first report of primate trafficking from the Neotropics. The monkeys were probably wedge-capped capuchins (*C. olivaceus*) or howler monkeys (*A. arctoidea*).

In 1504, Angelo Trevisan, assistant to the Venetian ambassador to the Spanish Crown, provided information on the primates encountered in continental America (Vannini de Gerulewicz 1989). He narrated part of the story of Pedro Alonso-Niño (1569–1502), who in 1499 directed an expedition to the region of Paria. Trevisan (1989: 151) wrote that “Entering the island [refers to *terra firme* = Paria], they saw forests with the tallest dense trees, from where voices of animals filled the country with strange howls. But they saw that there were no dangerous animals, because the local inhabitants of those forests walked quietly, without fear, with their bows and spears. ” Considering the particular tendency of reporting primates in the earliest XV century chronicles (Urbani 1999, this study), it is quite probable that the above mentioned animals with their particular vocalization were almost certainly howler monkeys (*A. arctoidea*).

Few illustrations have been found that show primates from Brazil during the XVIth century. In 1557, the German traveler Hans Staden (1525–1579) provided an illustration of a primate together with Amerindiands and a European (Fig. 1). In 1558, the French traveler and cleric André de Thévet (1502–1590) published his *Les singularitez de la France Antarctique*. This book has illustrations of three primates with humans (Fig. 2). Thévet visited the region of Rio de Janeiro, and it seems he was recording how Tupi Amerindiands interacted with monkeys (see also Urbani 1999). In 1585, Jean de Léry’s *Histoire d’un voyage fait en la terre du Bresil*… published not only descriptions of primates from the Brazilian coast but also an illustration. De Léry (1536–1613), a French explorer, visited the land of the Tupi in eastern Brazil. In this book, he presented an illustration of Tupinamba Amerindiands with a monkey (Fig. 3). In 1592, the publisher Theodore de Bry (1527–1598) printed a scene in the Brazilian coast of an indigenous community with Europeans and mythological entities, where a monkey was included (Fig. 3). These primates seem to be similar in term of the style with those illustrated Old World primates represented in the incunable books produced during the first century of printing (B. Urbani, unpublished).

By 1558, the renowned Swiss naturalist Konrad Gessner (1516–1565) already published his *Historie animalium*. This work included a review of the primates known in Europe by the first half of the XVIth century. In 1560, Gessner published his *Icones animalium* where the pre-Linnean zoologist published what seems to be the first scientific representation of a Neotropical monkey. The author showed different Old World monkeys such as a baboon and a macaque, primates from the Medieval imaginary, as well as the sagoin as an illustrated primate from the Americas (Fig. 1). A brief profile of this monkey, a marmoset (*Callithrix sp.*), is also presented. He noticed morpho-behavioral characteristics such as its small size, and its agile and elusive nature. Gessner used the term Galeopithecum for referring to this primate.

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POPULATION DENSITY OF THE RED HOWLER MONKEY (ALOUATTA SENICULUS) IN A TROPICAL DRY FOREST FRAGMENT IN NORTHWESTERN COLOMBIA

Juan Carlos Mejía Flórez 
Jorge Andrés López Delgado

Introduction

The tropical dry forest is one of the most endangered habi-
tats in this region. This habitat has been reduced to 1.5% 
of its original range due to anthropogenic effects (Murphy 
and Lugo 1986; Ramírez and Tesillo 2001). New World 
primates are dependent on arboreal habitats, so habitat loss

Data collection

We estimated the density of red howler monkeys follow-
ing the protocol presented by Peres (1999). From Novem-
ber 28 to December 1, 2005, five transects ranging from 
800 to 1200 m were prepared from south to north in the 
forest fragment (Fig. 1). These five transects were walked 
from December 2005 to February 2006. Transects were