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Letters

Recognizing past contributions

It is an error to say as Wray Herbert does ("Lucy's Uncommon Forebear," SN: 2/5/83, p. 88) that "only recently, with the completion of Susman's 18-month study of pygmy chimpanzees ... has such evidence been available. Because almost all previous observation of pygmy chimpanzees had involved the dozen or so animals in captivity..." Japanese primatologists, in particular T. Kano and S. Kuroda, began doing field work in Zaire in 1973, and prior to that T. Nishida did surveying. Kano presented preliminary results in English as early as 1974. ... Because Japanese primatologists have been involved in studies of the common chimp since the early 1960s, their articles on pygmy chimps contain excellent comparisons of social behavior — a critical part of the story. These studies very early on pointed to the conclusion that this species of chimp, in behavior also, is something different from the common chimp and unlike other apes.

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Another significant omission is that of the contribution of John E. Cronin who was the second author on the original NATURE paper proposing pygmy chimps as a possible prototype. Cronin was a student of Sarich, and early on saw the implications of the molecular findings for the pygmy chimp model. By 1975 Jack and I were involved in our formulation of the model subsequently published as the NATURE article. I regret this omission, as Cronin's contribution to the model was critical and of major significance.

Finally, I would like to clarify what Coolidge did say in 1933. Coolidge's 59-page paper is of central importance because in it, he argues for the specific, rather than sub-specific, designation of *Pan paniscus* — a species he essentially discovered. ... In arguing for specific designation, Coolidge discussed the morphological differences (primarily) between the two kinds of chimps and assessed *P. paniscus* as the more primitive and generalized. Coolidge's only theoretical statements come at the very end, on p. 56: "If this is true, the paniscus, a true pedomorphic species, which shows definitely juvenile characteristics in an adult state, is the most important of the chimpanzees in a study of the phylogeny and relationships of this high order of anthropoid apes. It may approach more closely to the common ancestor of chimpanzees and man than does any living chimpanzee hitherto discovered and described." ... Obviously any new idea in science has a history and builds upon previous work, but history is distorted and misrepresented here because Coolidge did not boldly propose an evolutionary model.

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