Mallophaga on Catarrhine Monkeys: Colobus guereza, a Natural Host of Proacricola colobi

According to Hopkins and Clay and Eichler, no Mallophaga exist on Old World monkeys. An adult female Colobus monkey (Colobus guereza guereza Rüppell, 1835), however, collected in Djamo-djamo, Shoa Province, Ethiopia, by Prof. D. Stareck in 1950 and now in the collection of the Anatomical Institute of Frankfurt, was found to be heavily infested by Proacricola colobi (Kellogg, 1910). This species was first described as Trichodectes colobi from Colobus guereza caudatus Thomas, 1885, at Mount Kilimanjaro. Eichler made Trichodectes colobi the type species of a new genus Meganarionoides based on the description by Kellogg. Wernecck has re-examined Kellogg's specimens and has found that they are members of Procricola, a genus otherwise known from many species of hyraxes (Procaviidae) only. He recognizes Meganarionoides as a sub-genus of Procricola. Wernecck doubted that the natural host of Procricola colobi was a Colobus monkey, especially as he has found a second lot of Procricola colobi at his disposal contaminated with other mallophaga, obviously originating from Procaviidae. Consequently, he suggested that the natural host is Dendrohyrax validus. In this he has been followed by Hopkins and Hopkins and Clay.

Our Colobus monkey from Ethiopia has never been in contact with a Dendrohyrax or any other Procaviidae after its death. Yet we have found hundreds of eggs and adult and larval Procricola on it, all clashing the hairs tightly; most of them on the back and on the throat. The eggs are clearly distinguishable from those of the sucking louse, Pediculus pietus Ferris, 1934, some specimens of which have also been found on this monkey. There is no doubt in our opinion that Colobus guereza is a natural host of Procricola (Meganarionoides) colobi.

Considering the general host-specificity and the supposedly parallel phylogeny of hosts and Mallophaga, it is interesting to find a member of a group of Mallophaga, which is otherwise confined to Procaviidae, on a monkey. Eichler had united the ichnocearian Mallophaga parasitizing primates in the sub-family Cebidicolinae of Trichoectidae. In 1963, after Wernecck's investigation, he removed Meganarionoides from this sub-family. But even the relationship of the two remaining genera (Loriscoia from the slow lenu (Nyctecobus), and Cebidicolia from some New World monkeys) seems highly uncertain. Hopkins and Clay consider Loriscoia "doubtfully distinct from Felicola", a genus widespread on carnivores. In any

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event, it seems hazardous to base any theories about the relationship of lemurs and New World monkeys on the relation of their parasites, Lorisiocola and Cebidicola, as, for example, Vanzolini and Guimarãeṣ have done. The Mallophaga probably have never been able to colonize the primates in populations sufficient to enable them to follow the phylogeny of these hosts, due possibly to the intensive care given to the skin by most primates. Suitable niches have opened, for example, in the nocturnal Aotes (Aotidea, Amblyvera) or the thumbless African Colobus monkeys, in which sucking-lice of the genus Pedicinus also have reached a climax in numbers of species and individuals among Old World monkeys. These niches must have been occupied by different Mallophaga invading from different orders of hosts.

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