

PREFACE

There have been a number of conferences and publications in recent years which have addressed aspects of primate and human evolution, but none have concentrated solely on two related problems in evolutionary studies, namely the definitions of, and relationships among, taxonomic groups. The Anatomical Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland invited one of us to organise a symposium on human evolution which stressed these two themes. It was then decided to invite the Primate Society of Great Britain to become a co-sponsor of the symposium, and the three editors were jointly charged with the task of assembling the programme and widening the scope to include all primates.

The subsequent symposium, "Major Topics in Primate and Human Evolution", was designed to try and address research problems associated with the major branching points of primate evolution. We adopted two strategies to try to illuminate some of the thornier topics. First, where appropriate, the data relating to a particular branching point were reviewed by leading proponents of alternative interpretations of the evidence. Secondly, we approached some of the problem areas of hominid evolution by asking experts to contribute papers about fossil evidence, or time periods, which were not necessarily their main research interest. We are grateful to all the contributors for the enthusiastic way they responded to these challenges. Their combined efforts have resulted in what we hope is a fresh and thorough review of the current status of our knowledge of primate evolution. This volume contains the papers that were presented at the symposium, but additionally the Osman Hill Lecture of the Primate Society and the Annual Review Lecture of the Anatomical Society were integrated into the symposium and we are grateful to the respective invited lecturers for agreeing to contribute to this volume.

We are grateful to the Councils of the Anatomical Society of Great Britain and Ireland and of the Primate Society of Great Britain and to the L.S.B. Leakey Trust for their support for the symposium. The meeting was held at The Middlesex Hospital Medical School and we thank the Dean and the staff for their help and cooperation. The assistance of Andrew Chamberlain, Miles Ellis, Susan Evans, Paula Sutton, Graham Wilson, Alan Day and the technical staff of the Department of Anatomy and Biology at that institution was indispensable and the smooth running of the meeting was due to their combined efforts. Many London-based colleagues generously helped us provide hospitality for the speakers from abroad.

With particular regard to this volume, we thank the contributor for adhering to our strict timetable, and we hope that the speed with which this book has been produced will be its own reward. We are grateful to Robin Pellow at Cambridge University Press and to Andrew Chamberlain and Paula Sutton of the Department of Anatomy and Biology for their help with its production. Andrew Chamberlain undertook the onerous task of producing the index, and we are grateful to him for the care he has taken with its preparation. The cover illustration was drawn for us by Anne-Elise Martin.

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