

SMITHSONIAN MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTIONS  
VOLUME 66, NUMBER 13

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IN CUBA

(WITH ONE PLATE)

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(PUBLICATION 2430)

CITY OF WASHINGTON  
PUBLISHED BY THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION  
DECEMBER 8, 1916

The Lord Baltimore Press  
BALTIMORE, MD., U. S. A.

## THE TEETH OF A MONKEY FOUND IN CUBA

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(WITH ONE PLATE)

In 1911 Ameghino described as *Montaneia anthropomorpha* a supposed new genus and species of American monkey from Cuba.<sup>1</sup> He based his account on a nearly complete set of mandibular teeth found associated with human remains in a cave near Sancti Spiritus. Dr. Louis Montané, the discoverer of these teeth, brought the specimens to Washington in December, 1915, and asked me to compare them with the South American material in the National Museum. On making this comparison we at once saw that the likeness of the Cuban teeth to those of *Ateles*, noticed by Ameghino,<sup>2</sup> amounted to such complete identity that in the absence of further evidence *Montaneia* could not be regarded as a distinct genus. The exact agreement in all essential characters between the type of *Montaneia* and an *Ateles* from Tehuantepec is shown by the accompanying photographs (plate 1). The only structural difference that can be observed is the unusual development in the Cuban specimen of the hypoconulid or "fifth cusp" in each of the molars, a peculiarity which caused Ameghino to see in the dentition a resemblance to that of man and the higher anthropoids.<sup>3</sup> Examination of numerous specimens shows that the hypoconulid in *Ateles* varies so much in size and distinctness that its degree of development must be considered as an individual or specific character and nothing more.

Ameghino remarks that the discovery made by Doctor Montané is noteworthy in view of the fact that no monkeys now occur in Cuba (p. 318). Not only do the islands of the Greater Antilles lack members of this group, but all<sup>4</sup> the living and recently extinct mammals yet found on them appear to be related to a South Ameri-

<sup>1</sup> An. Mus. Nac. Buenos Aires, ser. 3, Vol. 13, p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> "Se parecen á los de *Ateles* y más todavía á los del hombre" (p. 318).

<sup>3</sup> "La conformación de las coronas de las muelas persistentes se parece á los monos antropomorfos y al hombre, y todavía más á este último que á aquéllos" (p. 317).

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of the Jamaican *Oryzomys*, an animal whose history has almost certainly been different from that of the Antillean insectivores, ground-sloths, and hystricine rodents.

can fauna much older than any which is known to have included modern genera of monkeys. These circumstances, together with the facts that spider-monkeys are habitually tamed by the Indians in tropical America, and that the type of "*Montaneia*" was found in a cave used for human burial, make it seem probable that this particular set of teeth owed its presence in Cuba to man's agency. If this assumption were true it should be possible, so far as this can be done with such incomplete material, to identify the animal with some species now alive.

As the teeth of "*Montaneia*" differ specifically<sup>1</sup> from those of all the spider-monkeys in the National Museum I sent copies of the photograph here reproduced to Dr. J. A. Allen and to Mr. Oldfield Thomas. Dr. Allen could find no *Ateles* in the American Museum of Natural History that he would regard as probably conspecific with the animal whose teeth were represented. Mr. Thomas wrote under date of February 19, 1916, that a specimen in the British Museum collected at Nanegal, Ecuador, and supposed to be referable to *Ateles fuscipes* Gray, agreed "fairly closely" with the teeth of "*Montaneia*," though it did not show the unusual depth of the V-shaped notch on outer side of  $m_1$  and  $m_2$ . As the notches in question appear to have been made somewhat unduly conspicuous by the lighting of the specimen when it was photographed, this discrepancy is probably not very important. While not willing, on the sole basis of the mandibular dentition, to assert specific identity between the Ecuadorean *Ateles* and the animal to which the Cuban teeth belonged, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Martin A. C. Hinton, who also compared the photograph with the specimen, did not regard such identity as impossible.<sup>2</sup> Nothing further seems needed to lead to the following conclusions:

That the teeth of the animal described by Ameghino as *Montaneia anthropomorpha* have no more than a superficial resemblance to those of the *Pongidae* and *Hominidae*.

That the generic name *Montaneia* Ameghino, 1911, must for the present be placed in the synonymy of *Ateles* Geoffroy, 1806.

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<sup>1</sup>The chief peculiarity is the large size. Measurements: canine, 5.4 x 6.8; height of canine from base of enamel on outer side, 11.6; anterior premolar, 5.0 x 5.4; median premolar, 4.0 x 5.0; posterior premolar 4.2 x 5.2; first molar, 6.2 x 5.2; second molar, 6.2 x 5.6; third molar, 6.0 x 5.4.

<sup>2</sup>"To say that *Montaneia* was probably or possibly conspecific with the Ecuador *Ateles* would be too strong, but I would not say it wasn't" (Thomas in letter dated March 23, 1916).

That while the specific name *Montaneia anthropomorpha* cannot now be referred with certainty to the synonymy of any known *Ateles*, the resemblance of the Cuban teeth to those of a specimen from Ecuador makes eventual identification with a living species seem probable.

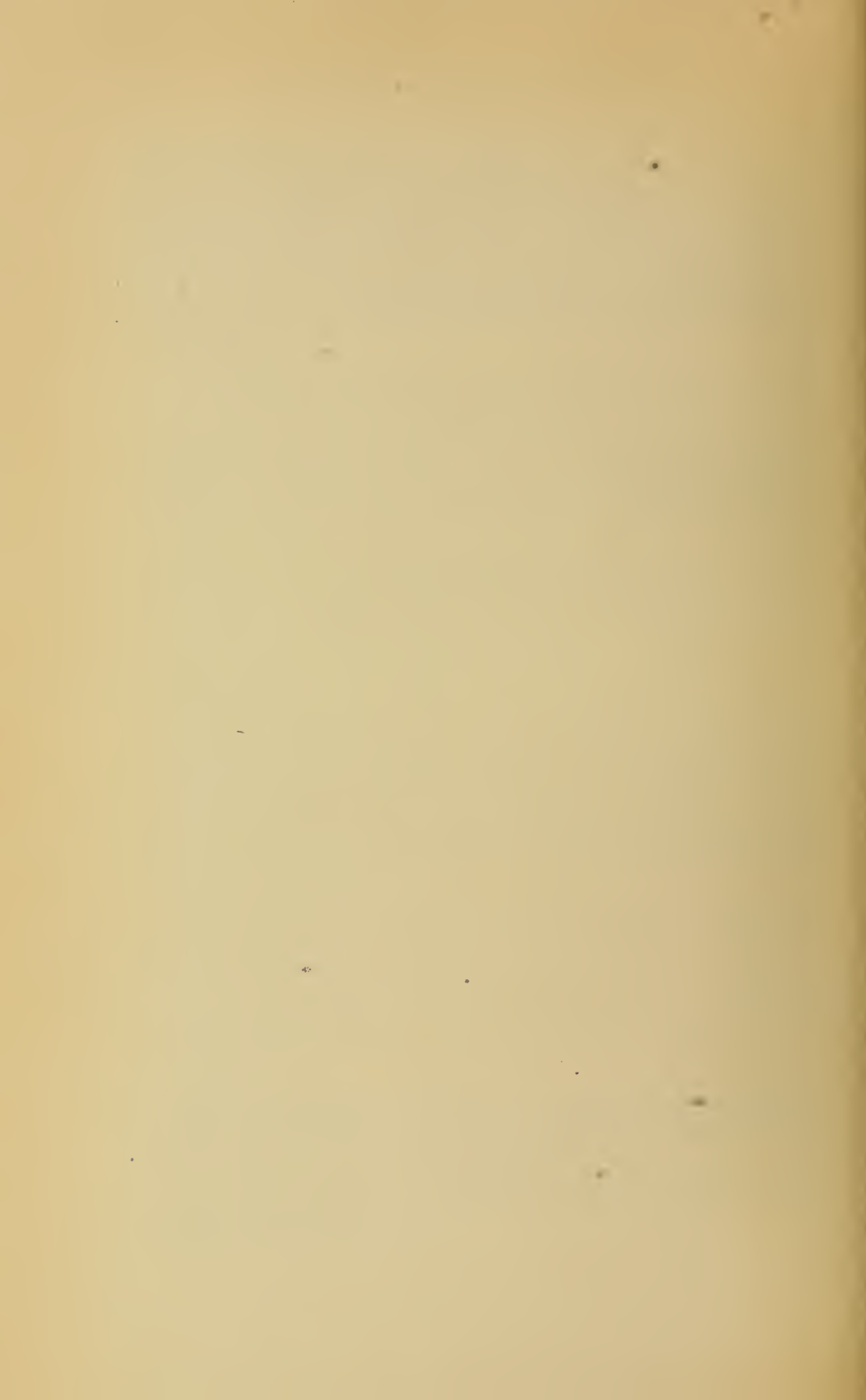
That without much doubt the presence of these spider-monkey's teeth in Cuba was due to the agency of man.

#### EXPLANATION OF PLATE

(Both figures natural size)

FIG. 1. *Ateles neglectus* Reinhardt. Tehuantepec, Mexico (No. 13858, U. S. National Museum).

FIG. 2. *Ateles* sp. Cuba. (Type of *Montaneia anthropomorpha* Ameghino.)





1. ATELES NEGLECTUS



2. TYPE OF "MONTANEIA"