

A Cercopithecoid Primate from the Late Miocene of Molayan, Afghanistan, with Remarks on *Mesopithecus*

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*The first fossil primate discovered in Afghanistan comes from the Late Miocene of Molayan, Khurd Kabul Basin. The materials consist of an almost-complete juvenile mandible and an isolated P₁. These two specimens do not significantly differ from the Pikermi *Mesopithecus pentelicus* and are assigned to this species. The primate mandible from the Late Miocene of Maragheh, Iran, which has always been referred by all authors to *M. pentelicus*, differs from the Pikermi and Molayan materials. It must be assigned to another taxon, probably a new one. The geographic range of *M. pentelicus* turns out to be considerably wider in view of the discovery of the species in Molayan, eastern Afghanistan.*

KEY WORDS: primate; *Mesopithecus*; Miocene; Afghanistan.

INTRODUCTION

Until 1976, Afghanistan had yielded only a few remains of fossil mammals—10 specimens belonging to seven taxa—coming from the

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Neogene sediments of the Bamian (Lang and Lavocat, 1968) and Lagman-Jalalabad (Raufi and Sickenberg, 1973) Basins.

Since 1976, paleontological explorations in Afghanistan have led to the discovery of many mammal-bearing fossil localities in the Neogene of five intramontane sedimentary basins, the Kabul, Aynak, Khurd Kabul, Sarobi, and Lagman-Jalalabad Basins (Heintz *et al.*, 1978, 1978c, Sen *et al.*, 1979).

Molayan, the first important locality of Tertiary mammals in Afghanistan, comparable in richness of taxa and specimens with the well-known fossil localities of Pikerimi, Samos, Maragha, etc., was discovered in 1977 (Heintz *et al.*, 1978a). It is located approximately 30 km southeast of Kabul, in the Khurd Kabul Basin, 1 km northeast of the village of Molayan, at the top of a small hill which is distinct in the landscape.

The first intensive excavation of this site took place in September–October 1978; it provided important paleontological materials which are currently being prepared. The first observations led us to attribute to the site a Late Miocene—more precisely, Turolian—age, about 7–9 million years. It forms part of a biochronological succession ranging from the Late Miocene to the Late Pliocene (Heintz *et al.*, 1979). The faunal list is provisionally as follows:

Primates

Mesopithecus pentelicus Wagner, 1839

Insectivora

Erinaceus

Carnivora

Felis

Dinofelis

Adcrocuta

Ictitherium (Ictitherium)

Ictitherium (Palhyaena)

Proboscidea

Deinotherium

Gomphotheriidae

Hyracoidea

Pliohyrax

Perissodactyla

Hipparion

Dicerorhinus

Ancylotherium

Artiodactyla

Microstonyx

Palaeotragus

Miotragocerus

Bovidae indet., four forms