

Decoding the messages behind touch-baby-genital behavior in stump-tailed macaques (*Macaca arctoides*)

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Abstract: Bridging behavior is a social interaction functioning for agonistic buffering between adult males while exploiting an infant as a social tool. This behavior was reported in Tibetan (*Macacathibetana*) and Barbary (*M. sylvanus*) macaques. It occurs after one adult male carrying an infant to another male, and then two adult males simultaneously lift an infant, suck or touch baby's genitalia, as if the infant was a bridge between the two males. Previously, this behavior was briefly mentioned in stump-tailed macaques (*M. arctoides*) who also have the egalitarian social system as those of Tibetan and Barbary macaques, but no explanation of the detail of use. Moreover, the stump-tailed macaques have been observed to display the touch-baby-genital (TBG) behavior of which the posture of the behavior is resemble to the bridging behavior, but it occurs between mother-holding infant and another group member. Regarding the distinctive characters of the newborn (0-2 months) of stump-tailed macaques that has a whitish pelage color and strong odor, it is likely that TBG might convey the message in a similar meaning with the bridging behavior. Thus, the behaviors of stump-tailed macaques in KhaoKrapookKhaoTaomor Non-hunting area, were observed and the data collections were divided into 2 sets; i) agonistic buffering behavior between males using *ad libitum* sampling method and ii) TBG between mother-holding infants and other group member using focal sampling method. The TBG in various age-class of male infants (0-2, 3-4, and 5-6 months) and between the male and female infant at the same age (0-2 months old) were compared. From the observations, male stump-tailed macaques did not express the social interactive behaviors via the infants, but using a direct body contact such as mock biting, mounting and grooming. The TBG was also used in female, while the 0-2 month male infants were significantly preferably pertained in this behavior. After analysis further, it was found that the higher frequency vocalization of male infant is one of the stimuli which trigger TBG behavior occurrences. In conclusion, this study gives the clue that stump-tailed macaques can maintain the egalitarian social system in their group by performing behaviors which reduce the probability of aggressiveness and build the bond between members such as TBG.

Keyword: bridging behavior, touch-baby-genital behavior, stump-tailed macaques.