

1 **Chemical cues of identity and reproductive status in Japanese macaques**

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18

19

20 **Abstract**

21 Olfactory communication plays an important role in the regulation of socio-sexual interactions  
22 in mammals. There is growing evidence that both human and non-human primates rely on odors  
23 to inform their mating decisions. Nevertheless, studies of primate chemical ecology remain  
24 scarce due to the difficulty of obtaining and analyzing samples. We analyzed 67 urine samples  
25 from 5 captive female Japanese macaques (*Macaca fuscata*) and 30 vaginal swabs from 3 of  
26 these females using gas chromatography–mass spectrometry and examined the relationship  
27 between odor (compounds identified, richness, intensity, and diversity) and female identity as  
28 well as cycle phase. We found a total of 36 urine compounds of which we identified 31, and 68  
29 vaginal compounds of which we identified 37. Our results suggest that urine and vaginal odor  
30 varied more between individuals than within cycle phases. However, we found that within a  
31 female cycle, urine samples from similar phases may cluster more than samples from different  
32 phases. Our results suggest that female odor may encode information about identity (vaginal  
33 and urine odor) and reproductive status (urine odor). The question of how conspecifics use  
34 female urine and vaginal odor remains open and could be tested using bioassays. Our results  
35 and their interpretation are constrained by our limited sample size and our study design.  
36 Nonetheless, our study provides insight into the potential signaling role of female odor in sexual  
37 communication in Japanese macaques and contributes to our understanding of how odors may  
38 influence mating strategies in primates.

39  
40 Keywords: olfactory communication, gas chromatography–mass spectrometry, sexual  
41 signaling, urine and vaginal odor, *Macaca fuscata*

## 42 **Introduction**

43 Communication plays a crucial role in mating decisions. Individuals are expected to choose or  
44 avoid potential mates based on the costs (e.g., disease transmission, energy investment, sexual  
45 competition, parental investment) and benefits (e.g., good genes, social support, increased  
46 fitness) associated with mating (Beltran-Bech & Richard, 2014; Møller et al., 1999; Thrall et  
47 al., 2000; Trivers, 1972). As a result, individuals exchange information about their attributes,  
48 including social rank, genotype, health, and fertility (e.g., sexual maturity, reproductive status)  
49 (Candolin, 2003; Snowdon, 2004), directly and indirectly benefitting both emitters and  
50 receivers. Emitters may attract potential mates and enhance intra-sexual competition, thus  
51 simultaneously increasing their mating opportunities and chances of producing attractive and  
52 strong offspring (*sexy-sons/daughters* and *good genes* hypotheses R. A. Fisher, 1915; Hamilton  
53 & Zuk, 1982). Meanwhile, receivers may balance the cost of mating by focusing their mating  
54 effort on mates that are fertile and capable of dealing with the costs of reproduction and by  
55 using information about their rivals' state to adjust their mating strategies to the level of  
56 competition.

57 Like many other animals, primates communicate through multiple sensory channels.  
58 Females display multiple traits that are attractive to males and correlate with their fixed (e.g.,  
59 social rank, age) or variable (e.g., reproductive status) attributes (Tables 1-2). Most studies of  
60 these traits have focused on female visual traits such as sexual swellings (enlargement of the  
61 anogenital area) and skin coloration in relation to fertility, probably because the sense of vision  
62 is particularly well developed in primates (Jacobs, 2008; Osorio & Vorobyev, 2005). Females  
63 can also inform conspecifics about their fertility through auditory (vocalizations or voice),  
64 behavioral (proceptive behaviors), and olfactory (odors) traits (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Examples of the potential ovulatory signaling function of female behavioral, visual, auditory, and olfactory traits in primates.

Species	Female trait	Reproductive status	Evidence
common marmosets, <i>Callithrix jacchus</i>	Anogenital odor	Correlates with the fertile phase.	Encoded information and receivers' response (Kücklich et al., 2019)
pygmy marmosets, <i>Cebuella pygmaea</i>	Anogenital gland or secretion odor	Correlates with the fertile phase.	Receivers' response (Converse et al., 1995)
tufted capuchins, <i>Cebus apella</i>	Proceptive behaviors	Correlate with the fertile phase.	Encoded information (Carosi & Visalberghi, 2002)
crested macaques, <i>Macaca nigra</i>	Sexual swelling (size)	Correlates with the fertile phase and conception <sup>1</sup> and swellings are not expressed during pregnancy.	Encoded information (Higham et al., 2012)
	Proceptive behaviors	Correlate with the fertile phase and conception.	
	Copulation calls	Correlate with the fertile phase.	
Barbary macaques, <i>Macaca sylvanus</i>	Sexual swelling (size)	Correlates with the fertile phase and swellings are expressed during early pregnancy.	Encoded information (Brauch et al., 2007; Möhle et al., 2005; Young et al., 2013)
	Proceptive behaviors	Not clear.	Encoded information (Brauch et al., 2007; Young et al., 2013)
	Copulation calls	Do not correlate with the fertile phase.	Encoded information (Pfefferle et al., 2008, 2011; Semple & McComb, 2000) Receivers' response (Semple & McComb, 2000)
stumptailed macaques, <i>Macaca arctoides</i>	Vaginal secretions	May indicate the periovulatory period and stimulate male sexual arousal	Receivers' response (Cerdeña-Molina et al., 2006)

long-tailed macaques, <i>Macaca fascicularis</i>	Sexual swelling (size)	Does not correlate with the fertile phase and swellings are expressed during early pregnancy.	Encoded information (Engelhardt et al., 2005, 2007)
	Proceptive behaviors	Correlate with the fertile phase and are expressed during the early pregnancy.	
	Copulation calls	Do not correlate with the fertile phase.	Encoded information (Engelhardt et al., 2012)
Japanese macaques, <i>Macaca fuscata</i>	Red skin coloration (face and hindquarters)	Correlates with the pregnancy period (face coloration) but not with the fertile phase or conception.	Encoded information (Rigaill et al., 2015; Rigaill, MacIntosh, et al., 2017; Rigaill et al., 2019) Receivers' response (Rigaill & Garcia, 2021)
	Proceptive behaviors	Correlate with the pregnancy period but not with the fertile phase.	Encoded information (Garcia et al., 2009; O'Neill et al., 2004; Rigaill et al., 2015)
	Copulation and 'estrus' calls	Do not correlate with the fertile phase, and may correlate with pregnancy.	
	Urine odor	May not correlate with the fertile phase.	Receivers' response (Rigaill, Suda-Hashimoto, et al., 2017)
rhesus macaques, <i>Macaca mulatta</i>	Red skin coloration (face)	Correlates with the fertile phase.	Encoded information (Dubuc et al., 2009; Higham et al., 2010) Receivers' response (Higham et al., 2011)
olive baboons, <i>Papio anubis</i>	Sexual swelling (size or shape)	Correlates with the fertile phase and pregnancy.	Encoded information (Altmann, 1970; Higham, Heistermann, et al., 2008; Higham, MacLarnon, et al., 2008; Rigaill et al., 2013)
	Red skin coloration (sexual swelling)	Correlates with pregnancy status but not with the fertile phase.	Encoded information (Higham, MacLarnon, et al., 2008; Rigaill et al., 2013)
	Proceptive behaviors	May correlate with the fertile phase.	Encoded information (Higham et al., 2009; Rigaill et al., 2013)
	Vaginal secretions	Correlate with the fertile phase	Encoded information (Vaglio et al., 2021) Receivers' response (Rigaill et al., 2013)

yellow baboons, <i>Papio cynocephalus</i>	Copulation calls	Do not correlate with the fertile phase.	Encoded information and receivers' response (Semple, 2001; Semple et al., 2002)
chacma baboons, <i>Papio ursinus</i>	Vaginal odor	Correlates with the fertile phase	Receivers' response (P. M. R. Clarke et al., 2009)
mandrills, <i>Mandrillus sphinx</i>	Sexual swelling (size or shape)	May not correlate with conception.	Encoded information (Huchard et al., 2009; Setchell & Wickings, 2004a, 2004b)
	Red skin coloration (sexual swelling)	May not correlate with conception.	Encoded information (Setchell, Charpentier, et al., 2006; Setchell & Wickings, 2004a)
	Red skin coloration (face)	Correlates with the pregnancy status, but not with the fertile phase or conception.	Encoded information (Setchell et al., 2009; Setchell, Wickings, et al., 2006)
sooty mangbeys, <i>Cercocebus torquatus atys</i>	Sexual swelling (size)	Correlates with the fertile phase but not with pregnancy.	Encoded information (Gordon et al., 1991)
howler monkeys, <i>Alouatta pigra</i>	Proceptive behaviors	Correlate with the fertile phase.	Encoded information (Van Belle et al., 2009)
bonobos, <i>Pan paniscus</i>	Sexual swelling (size)	Does not correlate with the fertile phase or pregnancy.	Encoded information (Douglas et al., 2016; Furuichi, 1987)
chimpanzees, <i>Pan troglodytes</i>	Sexual swelling (size)	Correlates with the fertile phase but not with pregnancy.	Encoded information (Deschner et al., 2003, 2004; Emery & Whitten, 2003; Wallis & Lemmon, 1986)
	Copulation calls	Do not correlate of the fertile phase.	Encoded information (Townsend et al., 2011)
	Vaginal secretions	May correlate with the fertile phase	Encoded information (Matsumoto-Oda et al., 2003)
humans, <i>Homo sapiens</i>	Red skin coloration (cheeks and lips)	Does not correlate with the fertile phase.	Encoded information (Burriss et al., 2015; Rigaill, 2020)
	Proceptive behaviors	Not clear.	Encoded information (Gangestad et al., 2002; Haselton et al., 2007)

	Voice pitch	Correlates with the fertile phase.	Encoded information and receivers' response (Pipitone & Gallup, 2008, 2012; Pisanski et al., 2018; Shoup-Knox et al., 2019)
	Body odor	Pleasantness may correlate with the period of highest fertility.	Receivers' response (Gildersleeve et al., 2012; Haselton et al., 2007; Kuukasjärvi et al., 2004; Singh & Bronstad, 2001) but see (Mei et al., 2022)

66 <sup>1</sup> difference between conceptive and non-conceptive cycles.

67           In comparison to visual and auditory traits, little is known about the potential role of  
68 olfactory traits in primate sexual communication. This is probably because primates were long  
69 regarded as microsmatic (having a reduced sense of olfaction, Heymann, 2006; T. D. Smith &  
70 Bhatnagar, 2004). However, there is now good evidence that odors encode information about  
71 an individual's state and may regulate primate social interactions (Table 2). Therefore, there is  
72 ample reason to suspect that odors also influence mating decisions in both human and non-  
73 human primates. Indeed, males attend more to female odors during the period of highest fertility  
74 than at other times (Table 1).

75



76 **Table 2.** Examples of individual characteristics encoded by odors in primates.

Species	Olfactory traits	Individual characteristics	Evidence
crowned lemurs, <i>Eulemur coronatus</i>	Anogenital odor (males: scent marks, females: secretion)	Correlates with sex.	Encoded information (Elwell et al., 2021)
ring-tailed lemurs, <i>Lemur catta</i>	Labial and scrotal secretions	Correlate with kinship, genetic compatibility and genetic quality. Are affected by health status.	Encoded information (Boulet et al., 2009, 2010; Charpentier et al., 2008; Grogan et al., 2019) Receivers' response (Charpentier et al., 2010; Grogan et al., 2019; Harris et al., 2018)
emperor tamarins, <i>Saguinus imperator</i>	Anogenital scent marks, scent gland secretions, and skin odor	Correlate with sex and differ between reproductive and non-reproductive individuals.	Encoded information (Poirier, Waterhouse, Dunn, et al., 2021; Poirier, Waterhouse, Watsa, et al., 2021)
Weddell's saddleback tamarins, <i>Leontocebus weddelli</i>	Anogenital scent marks, scent gland secretions, and skin odor	Correlate with sex and differ between reproductive and non-reproductive individuals.	Encoded information (Poirier, Waterhouse, Dunn, et al., 2021; Poirier, Waterhouse, Watsa, et al., 2021)
common marmosets, <i>Callithrix jacchus</i>	Circumgenital scent marks	Correlate with female familiarity, identity, age, and parity.	Encoded information (T. E. Smith et al., 1997; T. E. Smith, 2006; Kücklich et al., 2019) Receivers' response (Kücklich et al., 2019)
owl monkeys, <i>Aotus nancymaae</i>	Perianal gland secretions	Correlate with sex, age, and kinship.	Encoded information (Macdonald et al., 2008; Spence-Aizenberg et al., 2018)
rhesus macaques, <i>Macaca mulatta</i>	Body odor (genital area)	Correlates with familiarity or group membership.	Receivers' response (Henkel et al., 2015)
mandrills, <i>Mandrillus sphinx</i>	Sternal gland secretions and hairs	Correlate with sex, age, social rank in males, group identity, individual genetic quality, genetic compatibility, and health	Encoded information (Poirotte et al., 2017; Setchell et al., 2010, 2011; Vaglio et al., 2016) Receivers' response (Poirotte et al., 2017)

chimpanzees, <i>Pan troglodytes</i>	Urine odor	Correlates with group membership and kinship.	Receivers' response (Henkel & Setchell, 2018) <sup>77</sup>
humans, <i>Homo sapiens</i>	Axillary or body odor	Is affected by health but does not correlate with human leucocyte antigen genotype.	Receivers' response (Olsson et al., 2014; Probst et al., 2017)

78           Variation in the chemical composition of female odor, such as the presence or absence  
79 of compounds and their relative abundance, across and within individuals may inform  
80 conspecifics about a female's fertility. For example, sex hormones can influence the  
81 composition of female odor (humans: Michael et al., 1974; rhesus macaques: Michael &  
82 Keverne, 1970). Across primate species, the chemical composition of female odor varies  
83 between mating and non-mating seasons (ring-tailed lemurs: Scordato & Drea, 2007; Greene  
84 & Drea, 2014; and potentially Milne-Edwards' sifakas, *Propithecus edwardsi*: Morelli et al.,  
85 2013), across cycle phases (common marmosets: Kücklich et al., 2019; olive baboons: Vaglio  
86 et al., 2021; but see for chimpanzees: Fox, 1982), and between reproductive and non-  
87 reproductive individuals (tamarins: Poirier, Waterhouse, Dunn, et al., 2021; Poirier,  
88 Waterhouse, Watsa, et al., 2021; owl monkeys: Spence-Aizenberg et al., 2018). However, only  
89 one study of naturally cycling female catarrhines (Afroeurasian monkeys and apes, including  
90 humans) has yet found evidence that fine-scale intra-cycle variation in vaginal odor intensity  
91 correlates with ovulation (Vaglio et al., 2021). This limits our understanding of whether and  
92 how female odors modulate male and female mating strategies across primates.

93           Here, we aimed to determine the potential signaling function (i.e., encoded information)  
94 of female odor in relation to sexual communication in Japanese macaques (*Macaca fuscata*). In  
95 this seasonal species, female behaviors, vocalizations, and skin coloration vary with female  
96 reproductive status, both between cycle phases (Garcia et al., 2009; O'Neill et al., 2004; Rigaill  
97 et al., 2019), and from pre- to post-conception periods (Rigaill et al., 2015), but do not  
98 accurately signal ovulation (Rigaill & Garcia, 2021). It is not clear yet if males have access to  
99 other information about ovulation. Males biased their mating effort to the fertile phase in one  
100 study (Garcia et al., 2009) but not in others (O'Neill et al., 2004; Rigaill & Garcia, 2021).  
101 However, females exhibit a strong vaginal or urinary odor during the mating season and males  
102 frequently inspect females' genital areas by sniffing or touching them (Garcia & Rigaill,

103 unpublished observations of Wakasa captive group housed at Kyoto University Primate  
104 Research Institute during the mating seasons in 2011-12 and 2015-16, and of Main Group of  
105 Kojima Island, Wildlife Research Center, Kyoto University during the mating season in 2013-  
106 14). Female odor may thus vary between individuals and cycle phases, as shown in other  
107 primates (Table 1), and guide male mating behaviors.

108 We aimed to determine if female odor contains information about a female's timing of  
109 ovulation. Here, we describe female urine and vaginal odor in Japanese macaques, focusing on  
110 their chemical composition, complexity, intensity, and diversity, and examine how odor varies  
111 between individuals and cycles (i.e., with a female's cycle) and within cycles (i.e., between pre-  
112 fertile, fertile, and post-fertile phases). Our sample size is small (67 samples from 5 females for  
113 urine, 30 samples from 3 females for vaginal odor), due to the difficulty inherent in obtaining  
114 samples, but our study informs two hypotheses:

- 115 1. Female vaginal or urine odor conveys information about individual characteristics. If  
116 so, we predict that the chemical composition, complexity, intensity, or diversity of  
117 female urine or vaginal odor will vary across individuals. We also predict greater  
118 variation across than within individuals.
- 119 2. Female odor conveys information about the timing of ovulation. If so, we predict that  
120 the chemical composition, complexity, intensity, or diversity of vaginal and urine odor  
121 will vary between a given cycle's cycle phases, particularly between the fertile phase  
122 and the pre- and post-fertile phases.

123

## 124 **Methods**

### 125 **Study subjects**

126 We sampled 5 adult and naturally cycling female Japanese macaques ( $12.2 \pm \text{SD } 3.0$  years old,  
127 range = 8–16 years) housed at the Kyoto University Center for the Evolutionary Origins of

128 Human Behavior (EHUB, Inuyama, Japan; previously the Primate Research Institute). During  
129 the training period, females were housed in individual cages (W90 cm, D76 cm, H85 cm) in  
130 the same room (size: W4.0 m, D6.0 m, temperature: 27°C). Females were moved to a different  
131 room (individual cage size: W78 cm, D65 cm, H80 cm, temperature: 20°C, window to the  
132 external environment) for the data collection period. In both periods, females were housed with  
133 3 adult males with whom they had visual, auditory, and olfactory communication but no  
134 physical contact. Animals were fed twice daily (monkey pellets and sweet potatoes). Water was  
135 supplied *ad libitum*.

136 Our research protocol was reviewed and approved by the EHUB Center for Human  
137 Evolution Modeling Research (research protocol 2014-082-10). Our methods comply with the  
138 Guidelines for the Care and Use of Nonhuman Primates of Kyoto University EHUB and with  
139 the American Society of Primatologists Principles for the Ethical Treatment of Non-Human  
140 Primates.

141

## 142 **Animal training**

143 We used positive reinforcement (Fernström et al., 2009) to train female macaques to present  
144 their anogenital area and allow us to collect vaginal swabs for odor sampling (methods  
145 developed by NSH for EHUB). We trained females for 26 weeks from May to October 2014.  
146 Each female was trained during a 2-min session between 10.30 and 11.30 AM, 3 to 5 times a  
147 week. One trainer (NSH or LR) conducted the training session with one observer (LR, NSH, or  
148 LD). We used 1 cm<sup>3</sup> diced apples and peanuts as the primary reinforcer, and a clicker as a  
149 secondary reinforcer. We carried out training step by step following a predetermined order of  
150 defined behaviors (see supplementary material, Table S1 adapted from Fernström et al., 2009).  
151 One female failed to reach cooperation level 2 after 60 training sessions. We thus excluded her  
152 from our training protocol and replaced her with another cycling adult female. We conducted

153 429 training sessions in total (mean per female = 86.8 sessions, range = 28–103 sessions).  
154 Success rates varied across individuals. All females achieved anogenital presentation training  
155 level 1 but only 2 allowed vaginal sampling. These 2 females already had experience with  
156 positive reinforcement training for similar or other purposes at EHUB. For vaginal sampling,  
157 we sampled these 2 females along with a third female, who did not complete training, but  
158 spontaneously presented her hindquarters to the experimenter and accepted odor sampling  
159 during the data collection period.

160

### 161 **Collection of vaginal and urine samples**

162 We collected data during the 2014–2015 mating season, from early November to late January  
163 (85 days in total). One experimenter (LR) collected vaginal and urine samples between 08.30  
164 AM and 11.00 AM. We aimed to collect samples every 2 days starting from the end of the first  
165 observed menstruation, which we determined as the day when no fresh blood was observed on  
166 the female anogenital area. Mean menstrual cycle length is  $27.3 \pm SD 5.1$  days in both wild and  
167 captive populations (Enomoto et al., 1979; Fooden & Aimi, 2005; Garcia et al., 2009; Nigi,  
168 1975; O’Neill et al., 2004). If the experimenter failed to collect a vaginal or urine sample on a  
169 designated day, they tried again the following day. The experimenter collected vaginal samples  
170 by gently rubbing a sterile cotton swab (Rikaken, Japan) 5 times on the vaginal walls (N = 3  
171 females). The experimenter started vaginal sample collection at least 10 min after entering the  
172 experimental room and after any observed micturition. The experimenter collected  
173 environmental controls by exposing sterile swabs to the air in the room to later identify volatiles  
174 that did not derive from the sampled females. To sample urine, the experimenter placed a plastic  
175 container, covered with mesh to prevent contamination from feces, under each female’s  
176 individual cage to collect urine samples (approximately 2 ml) directly after micturition (N = 5  
177 females). Our use of plastic containers to collect urine and the lack of matching controls such

178 as water collected from the same plastic containers to test for any effects of using plastic  
179 containers or vials on our urine results may affect subsequent chemical analyses (Drea et al.,  
180 2013).

181 We stored all samples in sterile sealed glass vials at  $-80\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  at EHUB to prevent chemical  
182 degradation of the volatile compounds (Drea et al., 2013). We used screw-capped clear glass  
183 vials of different diameters (D) and heights (H) (19x 10 ml vials of D 18 mm X H 50 mm, 94x  
184 20 ml vials D 25 mm X H 50 mm, 8x 50ml vials of D 30 mm X H 80 mm). We used different  
185 sizes of vial to store different types of sample. This may have affected our results because  
186 evaporation of samples depends on the available air space, and may be confounded with our  
187 predictor variables. In parallel, we kept a fraction of each urine sample at  $-20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  for hormonal  
188 analyses to determine the female's reproductive status. In total, we collected 35 vaginal samples  
189 (mean per female =  $11.7 \pm \text{SD } 4.5$ , N = 3 females), 169 urine samples (mean per female =  $33.8$   
190  $\pm \text{SD } 6.7$ , N = 5 females), and 45 environmental control samples over two consecutive  
191 menstrual cycles for each female.

192

### 193 **Determination of ovulation periods**

194 We determined sex hormone concentrations in a subset of 157 urine samples selected to  
195 determine ovulation dates (2 consecutive menstrual cycles per female, 10 menstrual cycles in  
196 total, mean per female =  $31.4 \pm \text{SD } 5.9$  samples). This sample is slightly smaller than the total  
197 because we excluded samples collected on consecutive days, and those collected just before or  
198 after menstruation. We analyzed urine samples for estrone conjugates (E1C) and pregnanediol-  
199 3-glucuronide (PdG) using previously described and validated enzyme immunoassays (EIA)  
200 (Rigaill, Suda-Hashimoto, et al., 2017). We estimated that ovulation (day 0) occurred the day  
201 following a urinary E1C peak associated with a continuous raise in PdG concentrations (Fujita  
202 et al., 2001). We labelled the day directly preceding the estimated ovulation day as day -1, the

203 day directly following it as day +1, and so on. We defined the fertile phase as the 5-day period  
204 covering day -2 to day +2 to account for the life span of sperm in the female tract (macaques:  
205 Behboodi et al., 1991). The pre-fertile and post-fertile phases covered the 5 days preceding (day  
206 -7 to day -3) and following (day +3 to day +7) the fertile phase. Hormonal profiles showed that  
207 one of the 5 females (female 1) had abnormal hormonal patterns after her first cycle, so we  
208 excluded her second cycle from the analyses. The cycle length of the 8 cycles for which we  
209 observed menstrual bleeding was  $29.4 \pm \text{SD } 6.9$  days.

210

### 211 **Chemical analyses**

212 We used 67 urine samples (mean per female =  $7.4 \pm \text{SD } 0.7$  samples, 2 consecutive cycles per  
213 female except for one female, Table 3) and 30 vaginal samples (mean per female =  $7.5 \pm \text{SD}$   
214  $0.6$  samples, one menstrual cycle for two females and two consecutive menstrual cycles for the  
215 remaining female, Table 4) collected during the pre-fertile, fertile, and post-fertile phases for  
216 odor analyses, along with 24 corresponding environmental control samples collected on the  
217 same day as the test samples. We did not analyze the remaining 102 urine samples (mean per  
218 female =  $21.4 \pm \text{SD } 8.0$  samples) and 5 vaginal samples (5 samples from female 1, second  
219 abnormal cycle) collected outside the 15-day period of interest.

220 We carried out laboratory analyses of odor at the Laboratory for Analysis and Research  
221 in Environmental Chemistry - Italian National Research Council, Florence, Italy. We shipped  
222 samples via airmail, using dry ice to keep them cold ( $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). We investigated the volatile  
223 compounds found in the Japanese macaque odor using solid-phase microextraction and gas  
224 chromatography-mass spectrometry, applying the same methods used in other work on primate  
225 odor signals (reviewed in Walker & Vaglio, 2021).

226 We introduced a  $65 \mu\text{m}$  polydimethylsiloxane/divinylbenzene solid-phase  
227 microextraction syringe needle through the vial septum and exposed the fiber to the headspace



228 above the sample in the vial for 15 minutes at 40°C. We analyzed the adsorbed volatile analytes  
229 using a 597 5C mass spectrometer (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA) EI, 70 eV, coupled  
230 directly to a 7890B gas chromatograph (Agilent Technologies) equipped with a fused silica  
231 HP5-MS UI capillary column (Agilent Technologies) 30 m x 0.25 mm crossbonded 5%-phenyl-  
232 95%-dimethylpolysiloxane, film thickness 0.25µm. We maintained the injector temperature at  
233 270°C and transfer line temperature at 280°C. We made injections in spitless mode (purge valve  
234 opened after 1 minute) with a constant flow of helium carrier gas of 1 ml per minute. We started  
235 the oven temperature program at 45°C for 2 minutes, then raised it by 4°C per minute to 170  
236 °C and then by 20°C per minute to 300°C.

237 We assessed potential contamination from the laboratory environment using blank  
238 analyses of an empty 10 ml vial (Supelco) following the same procedure used for the samples  
239 (laboratory controls). We conditioned the fiber at 260°C for 5 minutes pre-injection and 20  
240 minutes post-injection to avoid any possible carry-over effects. We conducted these  
241 conditioning steps every day before analyzing samples.

242

### 243 **Identification of compounds**

244 From visual inspection of chromatograms (see examples of typical chromatograms in the  
245 supplementary material, Figure S1), we detected 36 peaks from urine samples and 68 peaks  
246 from vaginal samples that were absent in both environmental and laboratory controls. We found  
247 25 compounds that did not derive from the animals and removed these from the swab results.

248 We standardized peak retention times using an internal standard (alpha pinene). We integrated  
249 chromatograms to obtain retention time and peak area data using ChemStation software  
250 (Agilent Technologies). We tentatively identified the eluted compounds by comparing the  
251 experimental spectra with the spectra provided by the National Institute of Standards and  
252 Technology (NIST) mass spectral database, version MSDF.01.01.2317 (Agilent Technologies).

253 We considered the identification valid when the minimum matching factor exceeded 80%. If  
254 more than one compound was a good match for the same chromatographic peak, we compared  
255 Kovats' retention index with values reported in the literature for the same chromatographic  
256 column type to minimize the chances of misidentification. We also checked whether more than  
257 one compound co-eluted below the same detected peak by checking the mass fragments using  
258 ChemStation software.

259 We determined the relative amounts of compounds by integrating the areas of the  
260 corresponding peaks in the total ion current profile and calculated percentages with respect to  
261 the total area. We retained peaks that comprised at least 0.05% of the total area of the  
262 chromatogram to avoid problems associated with unreliable quantification at very low relative  
263 amounts (i.e., to exclude the background noise), although this may mean that we missed trace  
264 chemicals (T. E. Smith et al., 2001). We analyzed all samples over a few days to minimize  
265 interassay variability.

266 We describe the chemical composition of the 67 urine and 30 vaginal samples according  
267 to female identity as well as cycle phases, including the percentage of samples in each category  
268 that included each compound detected for urine (N = 36 compounds) and vaginal (N = 68  
269 compounds) samples (Tables 3-4). For the following analyses, we excluded all compounds that  
270 co-eluted as we cannot be sure about the measure of their contribution to the total ion current  
271 (Drea et al., 2013). Two urine samples only contained co-eluted compounds, this may be due  
272 to a mistake occurring at any step between data collection and chemical evaluation. We thus  
273 removed these samples from the data set. Overall, we excluded 1 of 36 (3%) urine compounds  
274 (Table 3) and 10 of 68 (15%) vaginal compounds (Table 4).

275

276 **Data analyses**

277 We carried out analyses using R software (version 4.0.3). We conducted our analyses on 35  
278 compounds detected across 65 urine and 58 compounds detected across 30 vaginal samples.

279 We investigated the relationship between female odor and identity as well as cycle  
280 phase. Several quantitative or qualitative analytic tools can be used to investigate chemical data.  
281 The choice of one approach over another largely depends on the nature of the data (and the  
282 methods used for chemical analyses), the species (e.g., whether chemical profiles are composed  
283 of single or multiple compounds), the number of samples, and the research question (Drea et  
284 al., 2013). Some studies assess the presence/absence of one or few compounds or categories of  
285 compounds of interest (e.g., fatty acids or alcohols), while others reduce the dimensionality of  
286 the data set (Drea et al., 2013). However, these methods may underestimate or overestimate  
287 variance in chemical composition between samples by analyzing only a subset of the data (Drea  
288 et al., 2013).

289 We opted for a conservative approach, keeping all compounds of the animal swab  
290 results in the analyses and avoiding subjective thresholds such as retaining compounds or  
291 variables based on *a priori* assumptions about these compounds' roles or on mathematical  
292 rather than biological reasons. We used Nonmetric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS), a rank-  
293 based approach relying on distance or dissimilarity matrix, to represent pairwise dissimilarity  
294 between samples in a dimensional space.

295 We tested for differences in both urine and vaginal samples according to female identity  
296 and cycle phases. We computed a distance matrix for the data with the Bray-Curtis dissimilarity  
297 index using the `vegdist` function in the *vegan* package (Oksanen et al., 2020). We then  
298 calculated the 2-dimensional NMDS coordinates from these Bray-Curtis indices using the  
299 `metaMDS` function in the *vegan* package and plotted the outcomes (Wickham, 2016). The stress  
300 factors, which roughly represent the goodness of fit, associated with the coordinates were 0.19  
301 for urine and 0.18 for vaginal data, and are thus considered fair (K. R. Clarke, 1993). We then

302 performed a permutational multivariate analysis of variance (PERMANOVA) using distance  
303 matrices by using the *Adonis* function in (*vegan* package). This analysis tests whether the  
304 centroids and dispersion of the groups tested as defined by measure space are equivalent for all  
305 groups (Anderson, 2017). Because females contributed the data for one or two consecutive  
306 menstrual cycles, we used “a female’s cycle” in our analyses as a proxy for both “menstrual  
307 cycle” and “female identity”. Here we thus tested the effect of the interaction between a  
308 female’s cycle and cycle phase (i.e., *Are samples from the same cycle phase more or less similar*  
309 *than samples from another cycle phase within a female given cycle?*).

310 To facilitate comparison with other studies of similar research questions and substrates  
311 (e.g., vaginal secretions, Vaglio et al., 2021), we also calculated three diversity indexes to  
312 graphically investigate variation in sample richness (total number of detected peaks per  
313 sample), Shannon’s H (which accounts for the relative abundance of each compound within a  
314 sample) and odor intensity (total area of detected peaks per sample). Richness and Shannon H  
315 of both urine and vaginal samples followed a normal distribution while urine and vaginal  
316 intensity followed a lognormal distribution. We explored variation across females and cycle  
317 phases graphically by plotting urine and vaginal richness, Shannon H, and intensity against  
318 either female identity (categorical variable) or cycle phase (categorical variable).

319

## 320 **Data availability statement**

321 The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in figshare,  
322 doi:10.6084/m9.figshare.19649766.

323

## 324 **Results**

### 325 **Identity of volatile compounds**

326 We detected 36 volatile compounds from the analysis of 67 urine samples. We proposed a  
327 tentative identification for 31 of these compounds, including one that may result from chromatic  
328 co-elution (Table 3). We detected 68 volatile compounds from the analysis of 30 vaginal  
329 samples. We proposed a tentative identification for 37 of these vaginal compounds, with nine  
330 compounds that may result from chromatic co-elution (Table 4). Only five volatile compounds  
331 were found in both urine and vaginal samples (2-pentanone, 2-hexanone, dimethyl disulfide,  
332 toluene, 2-heptanone, Tables 3-4). This represents 5% (5/104) of all the compounds detected in  
333 urine and vaginal samples.

334

### 335 **Inter-individual variation in female odor**

336 Nineteen of 36 urine compounds (53%) were unique to one of the five females (Table 3).  
337 Although the two dimensions extracted from the NMDS did not clearly cluster samples per  
338 female identity (Fig. 1), the results of the PERMANOVA suggest that a female's cycle explains  
339 25% of the variance in the data (Table 5). Urine richness, and odor intensity varied across  
340 females (Fig. 2), with lower richness values in female 2 (Fig. 2A) and higher odor intensity in  
341 female 1 (Fig. 2C). Shannon H index showed lower inter-individual variation (Fig. 2).

342 Twenty-eight of 68 vaginal compounds (41%) appeared to be unique to one of the three  
343 females (Table 4). The two dimensions extracted from NMDS and the results of the  
344 PERMANOVA suggest that a female's cycle explains 29% of the variance in the data and the  
345 grouping patterns of samples (Fig. 3, Table 5). Vaginal richness, Shannon's H index, and odor  
346 intensity varied across females (Fig. 2). One female (female 1) showed lower vaginal richness,  
347 Shannon H, and intensity values than the two other females sampled (Fig. 2D, E, F).

348

### 349 **Intra-cycle variation in female odor**

350 Ten urine compounds (28%) were only found during the fertile phase (Table 3). The cycle phase  
351 explained only 3% of the variance in urine data (Table 5). However, the interaction between a  
352 female's cycle and cycle phase explained most of the variance in the data (27%, Table 5). Thus,  
353 within a given female cycle, samples from same phases may cluster more than samples from  
354 different phases. There was little intra-cycle variation in urine richness, Shannon H, or intensity  
355 (Fig. 4). Urine richness, but not Shannon H (Fig. 4B), values tended to decrease from pre- to  
356 post-fertile phase (Fig. 4A), while urine intensity increased slightly during the fertile phase  
357 compared to pre- and post-fertile phases (Fig. 4C).

358 Six vaginal compounds (9%) were only found during the fertile phase (Table 4). The  
359 cycle phase or the interaction between a female's cycle and cycle phase explained respectively  
360 6% and 17% of the variance in vaginal data (Table 5). Vaginal richness, Shannon H, or intensity  
361 did not appear to vary across the menstrual cycle (Fig. 4).

362 Individual trajectories are presented in the supplementary materiel (Fig. S2-3).

363

364 **Table 3.** The 36 chemical compounds retrieved from 65 urine samples, their tentative  
365 identification, their mean peak area, and their presence in all samples and in samples from the  
366 fertile phase. Data are presented for all females and for each female's menstrual cycle.  
367 Compounds marked \* co-eluted and are not included in graphical exploration of the data. <sup>1</sup>  
368 Compounds often used as lab solvents (Drea et al., 2013) but kept in the analyses for  
369 comparison with previously published data set (Delbarco-Trillo et al., 2013; Vaglio et al.,  
370 2021).

371 *(Table 4 is provided as a separate file as it didn't fit in the manuscript)*

372

373 **Table 4.** The 68 chemical compounds retrieved from 30 vaginal samples, their tentative  
374 identification, their mean peak area, and their presence in all samples and in samples from the

375 fertile phase. Data are presented for all females and for each female's menstrual cycle.  
 376 Compounds marked \* co-eluted and are not included in graphical exploration of the data. <sup>1</sup>  
 377 Compounds often used as lab solvents (Drea et al., 2013) but kept in the analyses for  
 378 comparison with previously published data set (Vaglio et al., 2021).

379 (*Table 4 is provided as a separate file as it didn't fit in the manuscript*)

380

381 **Table 5.** PERMANOVA results based on Bray-Curtis dissimilarities using abundance data for  
 382 female odors from urine and vaginal samples

	<b>df</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Mean of Squares</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>
<i>Urine samples</i>					
Female's cycle	8	4.88	0.61	2.62	0.25
Cycle phase	2	0.63	0.31	1.35	0.03
Interaction	16	5.39	0.34	1.45	0.27
Residuals	38	8.84	0.23		0.45
Total	64	19.74			1.00
<i>Vaginal samples</i>					
Female's cycle	3	3.15	1.05	3.59	0.29
Cycle phase	2	0.62	0.31	1.06	0.06
Interaction	6	1.90	0.32	1.08	0.17
Residuals	18	5.27	0.29		0.48
Total	29	10.94			1.00

383

## 384 Discussion

385 We analyzed inter-individual and intra-cycle variation in urine and vaginal samples in female  
 386 Japanese macaques based on identified compounds, odor richness, diversity and intensity. We  
 387 identified 31 urine and 37 vaginal compounds of potential semiochemical importance in this  
 388 species that may be of interest for future work. Although our limited sample size restricts the  
 389 interpretation of our results, our analyses suggest that urine and vaginal odors varied more  
 390 between females than between cycle phases. However, we also found that, within a female's  
 391 cycle, urine samples from the same cycle phase may cluster more than samples from different  
 392 phases.

393 We tentatively identified 31 (86%) of 36 volatile compounds found in urine samples  
394 and 37 (54%) of 68 volatile compounds detected in female vaginal secretions. Some of the  
395 volatile compounds we identified are known to play a role in plant or insect communication or  
396 metabolism (source: <https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>). Some of the compounds we detected  
397 may be from the diced apples we used as a food reward during data collection (e.g., aldehydes:  
398 hexanal, nonanal, decanal, benzaldehyde; alcohols: ethanol, 1-butanol, 3-methyl-; esters: ethyl  
399 acetate, (Espino-Díaz et al., 2016)). However, it is also possible that these compounds are  
400 widespread across plant and animal species due to their role in both intra- and inter-species  
401 communication (e.g., pollination, alarm signals, mate attraction: (Das et al., 2013; Kelliher,  
402 2007; Leonhardt et al., 2016). Indeed, 16 (51%) and 13 (35%) of the volatile compounds we  
403 identified in urine and vaginal samples are found in female odor profiles (urine, vaginal  
404 secretions, glands, hairs) of other primate species, from strepsirrhines to hominins (Tables 3-  
405 4). Despite these general similarities across species, vaginal secretions have very dissimilar  
406 odor profiles in Japanese macaques (Table 4) and olive baboons (Vaglio et al., 2021). This is  
407 consistent with the hypothesis that (dis)similarities in odor profiles across primates relate to  
408 socio-ecological and phylogenetic factors (Delbarco-Trillo et al., 2011; delBarco-Trillo &  
409 Drea, 2014; Heymann, 2006; Jänig et al., 2019; Ueno, 1994).

410 We found that the relative abundance of compounds across urine and vaginal samples  
411 varied across individuals in female Japanese macaques. Urine is known to play a role in the  
412 individual recognition mechanisms of several species of mammals, including some platyrrhines  
413 (mice, *Mus domesticus*: J. L. Hurst et al., 2001; common marmosets: T. E. Smith, 2006). To  
414 our knowledge, our study is the first to show that urine odor, along with vaginal odor, may  
415 convey information about identity in a catarrhine species.

416 Exchanging information about identity through odors may benefit Japanese macaques,  
417 a species that lives in large cohesive groups (Fooden & Aimi, 2005). As proposed by Henkel



418 and colleagues for rhesus macaques (Henkel et al., 2015), the ability to identify individuals –  
419 and thus potentially kin, familiar, or higher-ranking conspecifics – may be crucial to coordinate  
420 movement and regulate social interactions. Males may pay particular attention to female odor  
421 during the mating season. Dominant or central males, which have a closer access to females,  
422 could use female anogenital (vaginal and urine) odor to follow and mate-guard fertile females  
423 during group movement and to frustrate females' attempts to escape male monopolization.  
424 Subordinate or peripheral males may also use female odor to find mating opportunities. Urine  
425 odor may be of particular interest in this latter case: since the information can be decoupled  
426 from the emitters, receivers may follow such fingerprints in the environment to find receptive  
427 and fertile females.

428         Our study provides some evidence that urine, but not vaginal, odor can be informative  
429 about a female's reproductive status in Japanese macaques. This may explain why in a previous  
430 study, male Japanese macaques did not investigate (i.e., smell or taste) urine samples from the  
431 fertile phase more than samples from other phases, as they were exposed to unknown rather  
432 than familiar females' odors (Rigaill, Suda-Hashimoto, et al., 2017). Across animals, urine is  
433 known to play a role in sexual signaling (Rothschild's giraffes, *Giraffa camelopardalis*  
434 *rothschildi*: Bercovitch et al., 2006; common squirrel monkeys, *Saimiri sciureus*: Candland et  
435 al., 1980; woolly spider monkeys, *Brachyteles arachnoides*: Milton, 1985; capuchin monkeys,  
436 *Cebus apella*: Phillips et al., 2011; Asian elephants, *Elephas maximus*: Rasmussen et al., 1982;  
437 giant pandas, *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*: Swaisgood et al., 2002). Our results suggest that this  
438 communicative process through urine may also be present in catarrhines. To investigate this  
439 hypothesis further, studies should assess male response to familiar female urine odor across  
440 different cycle phases using bioassays.

441         The fact that vaginal odor does not appear to encode information about the fertile period  
442 is surprising considering previous results in other primate species (Table 1 and Introduction).

443 It is possible that our small sample size prevented us from detecting any intra-cycle variation.  
444 Moreover, variation may occur within a few days of ovulation rather than across the broader  
445 cycle phases we studied. More and finer-scaled data are needed to better understand the  
446 relationship between vaginal odor and ovulatory signaling in Japanese macaques and other  
447 primate species.

448         Exciting research questions remain to be tested. If female odor varies in relation to sex  
449 hormone concentrations, then does odor vary with reproductive status in the same individual:  
450 e.g., between mating and non-mating periods, from prepubescent to sexually mature, between  
451 cycling and non-cycling phases, and from pre- to post-conception phases? Do female age,  
452 genetic profile, and health status influence this relationship and how might this affect female  
453 reproductive capacity and success? And, finally, does female odor modulate socio-sexual  
454 interactions, especially in relation to the level of female-female competition, and if so, how?  
455 This last question is particularly interesting as, besides advertising their fertility, females would  
456 also benefit from receiving information about their rivals' fertility status to increase their own  
457 mating success. They may intensify competition with other fertile females through agonistic  
458 interactions (Baniel et al., 2018; A. C. Hurst et al., 2017) or by exaggerating their own  
459 attractivity (e.g., behavioral or vocal solicitations (Fallon et al., 2016)). However, whether and  
460 how female odor modulates the level of intra-sexual competition is little studied in mammals,  
461 including primates (M. L. Fisher & Burch, 2021; Stockley et al., 2013). Investigating these  
462 research questions will provide valuable information about primate olfactory communication.  
463 However, doing so will be challenging in both captive and wild populations as such studies  
464 require longitudinal observations and data collection, a considerable budget for data storage  
465 and analyses, and may conflict with population management plans (e.g., use of contraceptives  
466 in breeding programs preclude analyses of female cycles).

467 In conclusion, our study identifies 31 volatile urine compounds and 37 volatile vaginal  
468 compounds of possible importance in olfactory communication in Japanese macaques. We  
469 found evidence for inter-individual (urine and vaginal samples) and intra-cycle (urine samples)  
470 differences in female odors. While we cannot draw clear conclusions about the role of female  
471 odors in Japanese macaque sexual communication, our results contribute to studies  
472 investigating how olfaction mediates socio-sexual interactions in human and non-human  
473 primates. To assess whether female odor has an adaptive sexual signaling function, further work  
474 is needed to increase sampling effort and determine if males and females can perceive inter-  
475 individual and intra-cycle differences in female odors, and whether female odors modify the  
476 receiver's behavior.

477

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490

#### 491 **Figures**

492 **Fig 1.** Nonmetric multidimensional scaling plots of similarity in urine sample chemical  
493 composition across cycles in relation to female identity and menstrual cycle phases.

494 **Fig 2.** Variation in urine (A, B, C) and vaginal (D, E, F) richness (A, D), Shannon H (B, E),  
495 and intensity (C, F) across females. Plots show the median (black horizontal line), first and third  
496 quartiles (top and bottom of the box), and the range (upper and lower whiskers) values.

497 **Fig 3.** Nonmetric multidimensional scaling plots of similarity in vaginal sample chemical  
498 composition in relation to female identity and menstrual cycle phases.

499 **Fig 4.** Variation in urine (A, B, C) and vaginal (D, E, F) richness (A, D), Shannon H (B, E),  
500 and intensity (C, F) across cycle phases. Plots show the median (black horizontal line), the first  
501 and third quartiles (top and bottom of the box), and the range (upper and lower whiskers) values.

502

503 **Fig S1.** Example of typical chromatographs from urine (A) and vaginal (B) samples during the  
504 fertile phase.

505 **Fig S2.** Individual variation in urine richness (A), Shannon H (B), and intensity (C) across cycle  
506 phases. Plots show the median (black horizontal line), first and third quartiles (top and bottom  
507 of the box), and the range (upper and lower whiskers).

508 **Fig S3.** Individual variation in vaginal richness (A), Shannon H (B), and intensity (C) across  
509 cycle phase. Plots show the median (black horizontal line), first and third quartiles (top and  
510 bottom of the box), and the range (upper and lower whiskers).

511

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