

PROPOSAL THAT AS BETWEEN THE NAMES "PICTUS" GMELIN ("COLUBER") AND "BOIGA" LACÉPÈDE ("COLUBER"), PUBLISHED IN 1789 ON THE SAME DATE, PREFERENCE SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE FORMER NAME. (SUPPLEMENT TO APPLICATION BY J. M. SAVAGE AND J. A. OLIVER IN REGARD TO THE GENERIC NAME "AHAETULLA" LINK, 1807) (CLASS REPTILIA)

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(For the proposal submitted see 1956, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 12 : 147—152)

The proposals brought before the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature by Savage & Oliver (1956, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 12 : 147—152) regarding the selection of a lectotype for *Coluber ahaetulla* Linnaeus, 1758, and the admission of the generic names *Ahaetulla* Link, 1807, *Leptophis* Bell, 1825, and *Dendrelaphis* Boulenger, 1890, to the *Official List* have my support, as well as the other proposals set out in paragraph 10 (pp. 151—152) of the paper referred to above. (It should be noted that in (2)(a) of the above paragraph the name *mycterizans* appears through some inadvertence in the incorrect form *mycterizana*.)

2. I am in agreement with the opinion expressed by Savage and Oliver in regard to the availability of the name *Coluber boiga* Lacépède, 1789 (*Quadr. Ovip.* 2 : 102). Nevertheless, I adhere to the view that the specific name *boiga* Lacépède, 1789, is not taxonomically valid—a point not discussed in Savage & Oliver's paper. The best known name for the snake to which the name *boiga* Lacépède applies is the name *pictus* Gmelin, [1789] (in Linnaeus, *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 13) 1(3) : 1116), as published in the combination *Coluber pictus*. This is the species currently known as *Dendrelaphis pictus* (Gmelin). This species is referred to under the name *pictus* Gmelin in numerous papers, e.g., by "Boulenger", 1890 (*Fauna Brit. Ind.*, Rept. : 337) and again in 1894 (*Cat. Snakes Brit. Mus.* 2 : 78). There would not have been any doubt today as to the taxonomic validity of the name *pictus* Gmelin if Stejneger had not slipped into the error of stating that the name *Coluber boiga* Lacépède was published as early as 1788 and therefore that it had priority over the name *Coluber pictus* Gmelin. Misled by this mistake of Stejneger's, Schmidt (K.P.) (1927, *Bull. Amer. Mus. nat. Hist.* 54 : 445) rejected the name *pictus* and introduced

in its place the name *boiga*. Later Stejneger (*Copeia* 1933 : 201) himself corrected the mistake which he had made in this matter. Up to the time of Schmidt's paper this species had almost always been known by the name *pictus* Gmelin and it is necessary to examine the validity of the action which he then took. He cannot, in my opinion, be regarded as having acted in this matter as a First Reviser, since the names *boiga* and *pictus* were published in different books and Article 28 of the *Règles* (which embodies the First Reviser Principle) applies only to names published in the same book. Moreover, he did not proceed from the supposition that the above names were published on the same date. I am convinced indeed that Schmidt would never have given *boiga* precedence over the name *pictus* if at that time he had known that both names were published in the same year (1789).

3. The exact date of publication in 1789 is not known either for the name *Coluber pictus* Gmelin or for the name *Coluber boiga* Lacépède. Accordingly both names rank, under a decision by the Thirteenth International Congress of Zoology, Paris, 1948 (1950, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 4 : 223—225), as from 31st December of the above year, that being the earliest date on which it is definitely known that they were published. In the absence of a decision by the International Commission there is therefore no means by which to determine to which of the above names preference should be given. I accordingly ask the International Commission to resolve this difficulty by giving a Ruling that preference is to be given to the name *pictus* Gmelin, the name most commonly used for the species concerned.

4. In addition to indicating my support for the proposals submitted by Savage & Oliver, I therefore ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature :—

- (1) to give a Ruling that preference is to be given to the specific name *pictus* Gmelin, [1789], as published in the combination *Coluber pictus*, over the specific name *boiga* Lacépède, 1789, as published in the combination *Coluber boiga*, these names being names published in different books on unknown dates in the same year ;
- (2) to place on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* the specific name *pictus* Gmelin, [1789], as published in the combination *Coluber pictus*, the entry so made to be endorsed in the manner recommended in (1) above.



Mertens, Robert. 1956. "Proposal that as between the names "pictus" Gmelin ("Coluber") and "boiga" Lacepede ("Coluber"), published in 1789 on the same date, preference should be given to the former name. (Supplement to application by J. M." *The Bulletin of zoological nomenclature* 12, 275–276.

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