HYPOSMOCOMA BUTLER, 1881 (INSECTA, LEPIDOPTERA): PROPOSED VALIDATION OF EMENDATION FROM HYPOSMOCHOMA. Z.N.(S.) 1853

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This is an appeal to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to place on the Official List the name Hyposmocoma (Butler, 1881) Walsingham, 1907, emendation, and to place on the Official Index the generic spelling Hyposmochoma. The facts are as follows:

1. Butler (1881: 399) proposed the generic name Hyposmochoma for one species of Microlepidoptera from Hawaii. He compounded the name to refer to scent-dispersing brushes of hairs on the hindwings of the male moth, and which he described as “the large fascicle of bristles emitted from the base of these wings (presumably a scent-fan) . . . .”

(a) It is believed that Butler erred in spelling the compounded word Hyposmochoma, which means: Hyp = under + osmo = scent + choma = heap or mound, which in this case appears rather meaningless, and that perhaps he meant to use Hyposmotrichoma, trichoma = hair, in reference to the hair-brush specifically mentioned in his original description.

2. Walsingham (1907: 549–550) emended the spelling to Hyposmocoma, and he commented as follows (p. 55):

“The generic name was obviously given in reference to the subcostal hair-pencil, ‘presumably a scent-fan’ (Btl. l.c.). Hyposmochoma (χωμα = a heap) would be neuter, and it seems advisable to make the slight correction to Hyposmocoma (κωμη = hair), feminine, which was doubtless intended.”

3. Butler described only one species, blackburnii, in the genus, and no other species were referred to it between 1881 and 1907. In 1907, in Fauna Hawaiiensis, Walsingham published a major monograph of the genus in which he listed 187 species-group names. All of these names were formed in the feminine gender in agreement with Hyposmocoma. Since 1907, many more species have been added to the genus, and now more than 300 species-group names are involved.

4. There has been no use made of the spelling Hyposmochoma since 1907. Every author who described a species in the genus, except Butler, in 1881, has consistently used the emended spelling Hyposmocoma, and the spelling Hyposmochoma has disappeared from the literature.

5. The proposer of this appeal now has nearing completion an extensive revision of the genus, and he believes that a ruling from the Commission is desirable to conserve the emended, widely used and universally accepted spelling Hyposmocoma.

(a) Should the original spelling Hyposmochoma be used, then the gender of more than 300 species-group names will have to be altered to conform to the neuter Hyposmochoma. This will lead to unnecessary confusion, and it will serve no useful purpose.
6. Advice was sought from Mr. Jasper Griffin, Oxford University, adviser on the classics to the Commission, and he contributed the following pertinent remarks:

"Hyp-osmo-coma is composed of intelligible elements (under, scent, hair) of which the first two are Greek, but the third is Latin, and feminine. The compound is thus, while perhaps not strictly 'correct' by standards of linguistic punctilio, perfectly clear, and seems quite reasonable.

"Hyposmochoma, on the other hand, although it looks more authentically Greek, could only come from ἔγνωμα, 'a heap, mound, promontory'. Just possibly . . . this could, I suppose have been meant; but it seems unlikely, and certainly not worth changing 300 specific names to restore.

"A better formation in the first place might have been Hyposmotrichoma, which would have included the Greek for 'hair', in line with the other Greek elements. But it seems to me that, as there seems no objection to names compounded from the two languages, the Commission ought to favour the retention of Hyposmocoma."

7. The acceptance of the emended spelling Hyposmocoma is in agreement with consistent usage by all authors for more than 60 years, it would contribute to stability and uniformity and it would avoid confusion. No useful purpose would be achieved by resurrecting the long-forgotten spelling Hyposmochoma which may be an original misspelling for Hyposmotrichoma. Therefore, the Commission is asked:

(1) to use its plenary powers to validate the emendation to Hyposmocoma of Hyposmochoma Butler, 1881;

(2) to place the generic name Hyposmocoma (emendation of Hyposmochoma) Butler, 1881 : 399 (gender: feminine) type-species, by monotypy, Hyposmocoma blackburnii Butler, on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology;

(3) to place the specific name blackburnii Butler, 1881 : 400, as published in the binomen Hyposmochoma blackburnii, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology;

(4) to place the generic name Hyposmochoma Butler, 1881 : 399 (ruled under the plenary powers in (1) above to be an incorrect original spelling for Hyposmocoma) on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology.

REFERENCES


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