

COLUBER CHIAMETLA SHAW, 1802 (REPTILIA, SERPENTES):
REVIVED PROPOSAL FOR SUPPRESSION UNDER THE
PLENARY POWERS Z.N.(S.) 1704

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In 1965 one of us (H.M.S.) presented a proposal for the suppression of *Coluber chiametla* Shaw, 1802, on the grounds that it was a nomen oblitum (*Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 22: 235-6). The proposal was supported by Professor Carl Gans but opposed by the late James L. Peters (1967, *Bull.* 24: 138). He claimed that the junior name involved, *Drymobius margaritiferus* (Schlegel, 1837), had not been referred to outside the systematic literature, and only rarely in that literature. Thus the changes of name (for two subspecies, from *D. margaritiferus margaritiferus* and *D.m. fistulosus* Smith, 1942 to *D. chiametla chiametla* and *D.c. margaritiferus*) would soon be accepted by the few specialists concerned. A reply (*Bull.* 24: 269) mentioned the existence of about 125 references to *margaritiferus* in the literature relating to Mexico and Guatemala alone (the species ranges from southern Texas to northern South America). It is perhaps the commonest snake in lowland Mexico and is represented by large numbers of specimens in museums and zoos. It is admittedly true that it is little known outside the systematic and zoogeographical literature except for a few ecological works.

2. The revised Articles 23 and 79 adopted by the Monaco Congress in 1972 require two conditions to be met before a *prima facie* case can be presented to the Commission for the suppression of an unused senior synonym: affirmation that the senior name has not been used as a valid name for the past 50 years, and that the threatened junior name has been used in at least 10 different works by five different authors during the same period. As the original proposal in this case came from our laboratories, it is incumbent on us to complete the documentation necessary for consideration of the case by the Commission.

3. Usage of the senior synonym.- We know of only four usages of the specific name *chiametla* as a valid name after its first proposal: two by Merrem (1820: 135; 1822: 594), and one by Wagler (1824: 14) all, as first pointed out by Gans (1964: 35), as *Natrix chiametla*; and one by Boie (1827: 533) as *Coluber chiametla* in a comment on Merrem, 1820. The only other citations

of the name have followed Gans' rediscovery of its misuse by Wagler for *Liophis miliaris* (Linnaeus, 1758), the references cited above in connection with this application, and further discussion of this case by Peters and Orejas-Miranda, 1970. In none of these was the name adopted as a valid name.

4. We can therefore state without reservation that the name *chiametla* has not been used as a valid name for the past 145 years, during which time its junior synonym *Herpetodryas margaritiferus* Schlegel, 1837 (now transferred to *Drymobius*) has consistently been applied to the same species.

5. Usage of the junior synonym.- It might be construed as prejudicial if we were to cite usages of *D. margaritiferus* subsequent to 1965, when the issue of the priority of *Coluber chiametla* was first raised and therefore maintenance of current usage was required. We therefore cite only a few of the more influential usages before that date: Amaral, 1929: 155; Alvarez del Toro, 1960: 158, 202; Ditmars, 1936: 188, 203; Bogert & Oliver, 1945: 327, 334; Duellman, 1965: 651-679; Schmidt, 1953: 192; Schmidt & Davis, 1941: 131; Smith & Taylor, 1945: 57; Shelford, 1963: 440; Stuart, 1963: 27; and Taylor, 1951: 89. These works include monographs, checklists, synoptic reviews and semipopular works. Well over a hundred other references could be found if desired.

6. We therefore ask the Commission

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name *chiametla* Shaw, 1802, as published in the binomen *Coluber chiametla*, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the specific name *margaritiferus* Schlegel, 1837, as published in the binomen *Herpetodryas margaritiferus*;
- (3) to place the specific name *chiametla* Shaw, 1802, as published in the binomen *Coluber chiametla*, and as suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above, on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology.

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