

Rejected Synonyms in MolluscaBase

Nguyen Ngoc Thach
Former Research Associate, Oceanographic Institute
Nha Trang, Vietnam
thachshells267@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT A large number of new species in this author's books on South Asian shells have been designated as synonyms by Páll-Gergely *et al.* 2020, without convincing proof. In the last quarter of 2020 (*i.e.*, August-November), MolluscaBase (an Internet website that is a taxonomically-oriented database, in which B. Páll-Gergely is an Editor) rejected forty-one of this author's new species based on incorrect synonymization. This article distinguishes the differences between some of those new species and previously described species which have been synonymized, and utilizes photo comparisons to depict the inaccuracies of these designations.

KEY WORDS *Bouchetcamaena*, *Trichochloritis*, *Rhiostoma abletti*, *Tropidophora huberi*

DISCUSSION

1. *Rhiostoma abletti* Thach 2016 (Figure 1a). This species was designated as a synonym of *Rhiostoma marioni* (Ancey, 1898) (Figure 1b) by Páll-Gergely *et al.* 2020, without convincing proof to support that designation. There are seven key differences that distinguish *R. abletti* from *R. marioni*: (1) air tube much shorter and not touching the remaining shell; (2) transverse ribs not widely-spaced; (3) terminal part of body whorl broader (*i.e.* larger in diameter), not extended and not separated far from remaining shell; (4) outer lip not thick; (5) sutures shallower; (6) whorls less conspicuous; and (7) lateral side of body whorl (*i.e.*, opposite to the aperture) not strongly convex. It is regrettable that Páll-Gergely *et al.* did not detect these differences, or worse chose to ignore them. However, I would welcome a similar comparison providing evidence supporting their conclusions.

2. *Tropidophora huberi* Thach, 2018 (Figure 2a). This species was designated as a synonym of *Leptopoma annamiticum* Möllendorff, 1900

(Figure 2b) by Páll-Gergely *et al.* 2020, also without convincing proof to support that designation. As with *R. abletti* and *R. marioni*, there are seven key differences that distinguish *T. huberi* from *L. annamiticum*: (1) lack of spiral ribs; (2) absence of peripheral keel; (3) lower spire; (4) much larger umbilicus; (5) presence of broad brown spiral band at periphery; (6) not oblique aperture; and (7) a more inflated ventral side. In particular, the spiral ribs, shape of body whorl and peripheral keel are important features commonly used in the identification of these shells. However, Páll-Gergely *et al.*'s suggestion that this species differs from *L. annamiticum* only by a rounded body whorl (see page 40, at left column of their article) borders on sophistry. The seven distinguishing characters identified above are not difficult to detect, and it is disappointing that they appear to have been ignored. Again, I welcome a similar comparison by my colleagues providing evidence supporting their conclusions.

3. *Amphidromus yenlinhae* Thach & F. Huber, 2017 (Figure 3a). Here again Páll-Gergely *et al.*

2020 has synonymized two clearly distinguishable species, *A. yenlinhae* and *A. eudeli* Ancey, 1897 (Figure 3b) without providing convincing proof to support that designation. The shell characters of the *A. yenlinhae* differs from *A. eudeli* mainly in: (1) a more slender shape; (2) body whorl not swollen; (3) narrower and more pointed spire; (4) early whorls vivid red; (5) oblique stripes not interrupted at the middle as cited in original description (Ancey, C.F. 1897, in *The Nautilus* magazine); (6) outer lip white (*i.e.* not purple) and distorted at posterior end; (7) columella having different shape and not pale at upper part as cited in original description; (8) sutures having different color; and (9) aperture smaller with external pattern visible within. These nine differences easily distinguish the two species and it is inappropriate to suggest they are conspecific. As previously stated, I welcome a similar comparison by my colleagues providing evidence supporting their conclusions.

4. Genus *Trichochloritis* Pilsbry, 1891

Páll-Gergely *et al.* 2020, incorrectly moved the species *Helix fouresi* Morlet, 1886 (Figure 4a) to the genus *Trichochloritis* Pilsbry, 1891 as its shell characters are significantly different from those of *Helix breviseta* Pfeiffer, 1862 (Figure 4b); the type species of this genus. These differences include: (1) presence of a deep groove along periphery of body whorl; (2) much shallower sutures; (3) different ribs at dorsal side; (4) not inflated whorls; (5) smaller umbilicus; (6) not angulate columella; (7) lacking brownish band on body whorl at dorsal side; (8) not deformed aperture; (9) absence of dark-colored band along the suture of body whorl; and (10) different colors. These character differences are diagnostic and clearly place *Helix fouresi* in the genus *Bouchetcamaena*.

5. Genus *Bouchetcamaena* Thach, 2018.

Páll-Gergely *et al.* 2020, has designated this genus as a synonym of the genus *Trichochloritis* Pilsbry, 1891 without providing convincing proof. In fact, the type species of the latter has none of the distinguishing characters of the type species of the former. Figures 5 and 6 show the type species of *Bouchetcamaena huberi* Thach, 2018. Further, Figures 5a and 6a show that *Bouchetcamaena* is significantly different from *Helix breviseta* Pfeiffer, 1862 (which is the type species of genus *Trichochloritis*, see Figures 5b, 6b). Those two genera differ in the following characters: (1) translucent shell; (2) not inflated whorls; (3) different sculpture; (4) presence of flat area at the middle of body whorl at dorsal side; (5) umbilicus narrower and not funnel-shaped; (6) not angulate columella; (7) absence of brownish spiral band at dorsal side; (8) rounded (not deformed) aperture; (9) lack of dark-colored band along suture of body whorl and (10) different colors. Figure 5 shows four additional significant differences: (11) the presence of conspicuous peripheral keel; (12) lateral side of body whorl not convex; (13) aperture tilted forward at about 30°; and (14) inferior side of the shell is overhung by peripheral keel. These shell character differences easily distinguish these two genera. If Páll-Gergely *et al.* can show, by comparison photos, the similarities between these two type species it would be helpful in understanding their conclusions. In order to cast further doubt about the validity of this genus, these authors state that “the validity of the genus *Bouchetcamaena* can be verified when more material becomes available.” It is evident that any taxon (even the genus described by Páll-Gergely *et al.* 2020) can be revised or changed in the future based upon the acquisition and study of additional specimens. However, it is scientifically valid to maintain any genus as an official taxon until a more thorough study can be performed.

▲ After synonymizing forty-one taxa named by this author without serious conchological consideration and analysis, Dr. Barna Páll-Gergely published this author's book "New Shells of South Asia, Volume 2" on Facebook without verbal or written permission. This action sheds light on a more systemic problem that confronts our scientific community. When one allows their ego to cloud their judgement, it raises the question of whether that individual's research may be similarly clouded. Moral principles such as integrity, humility and respect strengthen our community and support the fundamental foundation on which science is based. When one of our colleagues disregards these principles, it places a shadow over our entire community and taints the knowledge we struggle to obtain for the benefit of Society as a whole. There are many issues in nature that are waiting to be investigated by malacologists, and while important, synonymization of taxa should not be their primary focus.

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Plate 1. Differential diagnoses shown on Figures 1 through 6 as marked.