

Work on the Eupitheciini of East and South Asia, with particular reference to the *Eupithecia* of China

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Quite a lot of work has been done on *Eupithecia* in Asia. Professor Hiroshi Inoue has surveyed comprehensively Japan and Taiwan, and Nepal. V. Mironov and J. Viidalepp have done the same on Russia. J. Holloway has covered Borneo. But China remains a huge black hole in middle of this universe, and contains a great diversity of habitat, from boreal forest through desert to high mountain, subtropical and even tropical lowland.

When Dr Xue Dayong produced his book on the Larentiines of China, *Eupithecia* had to be omitted because the taxonomy was still too confused. While I was serving as British ambassador to China from 1997-2002, Dr Xue kindly allowed me to sort the large collection of *Eupithecia* which had been built up from 1949 onwards. By 2002 I had sorted the Chinese material and grouped it into about 160 species, but very few were identified, and it was difficult to decide which were undescribed.

The problem was that the only substantial collection of Chinese *Eupithecia* in Europe is the Höne collection in Bonn. This was worked on extensively from the early 70s to the end of the 80s by a Hungarian taxonomist, Dr Vojnits, who produced about 20 papers, describing in all 215 new taxa, most at species level, with a high proportion from China.

The papers were difficult to use for identifica-

tion purposes. There were almost no illustrations of adults. Descriptions were difficult to follow. Drawings of genitalia were sometimes sketchy, and proved to be frequently inaccurate, due probably to the inadequately stained preparations from which he was working. There were also printing errors in the papers. Worse, when Dr A. Vojnits left the museum in Hungary, the type and other material was left in an unsorted state, and was for long inaccessible. This constituted a sort of brick wall in front of further studies of Chinese *Eupithecia*. However following heroic efforts by Laszlo Ronkay and colleagues in Budapest, the material worked on by Dr Vojnits has at last been more or less sorted, and returned to its parent institutions last year. I have been working on it with Dr Mironov.

This has enabled rapid progress. Of Dr Vojnits' 215 names, we have discovered so far that some 90 are synonyms of previously described species. There is more type material yet to be examined. But I think we are on way to clarifying the situation, and Dr Mironov, Dr Xue Dayong and I have agreed to publish together a revision of the *Eupithecia* of China. We should be able to precede this with a paper describing 30 or more new species which we have come across during our study.

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