

NOTES ON TWO FICTITIOUS FLEAS FROM NEPAL

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A short paper by a mysterious „Dr Otto Suteminn“ on „Ergebnisse der zoologischen Forschungen von Dr. Z. Loew in Nepal: 17. Zwei neue Siphonaptera (Insecta)“ was published in the Z. Arb Gem. öst. Ent. 21 (3): 75–76, in December 1969. The nonsensical nature of the descriptions (which are not illustrated) of the two „new species“ leaves no doubt that this article cannot be taken seriously. Although the taxonomic flea literature contains some quaint descriptions, the ones referred to here stretch one's credulity too much. To anyone with some knowledge of fleas it will be apparent, if not clear, that they make no sense at all and it is not worth the trouble or the cost of printing to analyse and annotate these descriptions. For further evidence of the obvious fallacious nature of this publication one needs only examine the various names that occur in it.

Names of persons:

Z. Loew (Bratislava, ČSSR), O. Suteminn (Regionalmuseum, Košice, ČSSR), Z. Minař. — Colleagues of mine in Czechoslovakia kindly tried to locate persons with those names in the given places but they were not successful. A letter I wrote to Suteminn, asking for the loan of material, remained unanswered (but has not been returned as undeliverable).

Names of places:

Khanshnid Khaib (West Nepal), Samashtir (West Nepal), Kathaiwi (20 km east of Kathmandu), Kathmandu, Bhalari Satep (south Nepal inundation lowlands). — Kathmandu (or Katmandu) is the well-known capital of Nepal. The other names are very likely concoctions; I have been unable to trace any of them, while Prof. R. Lewis (Ames, Iowa) kindly informed me that the collector R. M. Mitchell, who knows Nepal very thoroughly, could make no sense of the localities either. It may be worth noting that with a little imagination one could read „Holotypus 1 ♂ Khanshnid Khaib“ as „Holotypus 1 ♂ Ganz nicht habe.“

Names of hosts:

Apodemus roseus TBL; *Canis fossor* L.; *Canis aureus*; *Spalax*. Of these names *Canis aureus* L. (Asiatic Jackal) and *Spalax* (mole-rats) are valid. The first two are fictitious.

Names of fleas:

Ctenophthalmus nepalensis n. sp., *Amalareus fossoris* n. sp. I regard these two names as invalid and unavailable because they are obviously based on fictional material. *Ctenophthalmus flavus*, *Amalareus sugitanii* Pall. These are fictitious names; there are no descriptions of species of fleas with those names.

Amalareus pencilliger. This would be a lapsus for *Amalareus penicilliger* (Grube). *Ctenophthalmus spalacis* Smit, 1963. Authorship and date should be: Jordan & Rothschild, 1911.

Ctenophthalmus pisticus Jord. & Rtsch., 1921 and *Spalacoctenophthalmus* (Wagner) (at most a subgenus of *Ctenophthalmus*) are correct nomenclaturally.

I shall be interested to hear (in confidence, if desired) from any reader who might know why this hoax paper was written. Was it merely to prove that it is still possible for almost anyone to publish almost anything?

It is fortunate that names based on hypothetical or mythical taxa have no status in nomenclature.

H. Holzinger most kindly suggested that several names could be regarded as transcriptions of Austrian dialectal phrases:

„Khanshnid Khaib“ probably stands for „Kann's nit geiba“ (cannot exist); „Samashtir“ appears to be based on „Sam ma Stier“ (= sind wir Stier), Viennese slang for „we have no money“; „Bhalari Satep“ is partly explicable: „is a Tepp“ is dialectal for „ist ein Tepp“ (is an idiot) — Bhalari is a cryptonym; „leg. Z. Minař“ can sound like a very vulgar (unprintable) expression.

„Otto Suteminn“ is obviously familiar with Austrian dialects.

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