DENDRASPIS FITZINGER, 1843 (REPTILIA, SERPENTES); PROPOSED SUPPRESSION UNDER THE PLENARY POWERS. Z.N.(S.) 1500

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The object of the present application is to ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to use its plenary powers to suppress the generic name Dendraspis Fitzinger, 1843 (Syst. Rept. : 28), which according to the Law of Priority would be the correct generic name for the Indian King Cobra, Ophiophagus hannah (Cantor, 1836).

2. The generic name for the four species of “Mambas”, well-known venomous snakes of Africa, has been cited in the earlier literature as Dendraspis, attributed to Schlegel, 1848 (Schlegel, Over Elaps jameisonii Traill etc., Natura Artis Magistra 1848 : 5) and with Elaps jameisonii Traill, 1843 (Edinb. New Phil. J. 34(66) : 54) as type-species (designation by monotypy). In 1936 Brongersma (Zool. Mededeel. 19 : 136) pointed out that the generic name introduced by Schlegel was not Dendraspis but Dendoasps, Dendraspis being no more than an invalid subsequent spelling first introduced by Duméril, 1856 (Rev. Mag. Zool. (2) 8 : 558). Since that time the correct use of this spelling is to be found more frequently in scientific publications.

3. The binomen Naja hannah Cantor, 1836 (Asiat. Research 19(1) : 187) has frequently been used as the scientific name for the Indian King-Cobra, the well-known largest species of poisonous snakes. In recent literature however we find the opinion that this species represents a separate monotypical genus, for which Ophiophagus Günther, 1864 (Rept. bril. Ind. : 340), with Hamadryas elaps Günther, 1858 (=hannah Cantor, 1836) as type-species was consistently regarded as the valid name. In the synonymy of Hamadryas elaps, Günther (1858) quotes Naja elaps Schlegel, 1837, having misidentified the latter, which is in fact a synonym of Micronechis ikakeha (Lesson, 1830). It had been overlooked that Fitzinger, 1843 (Syst. Rept. : 28) designated Naja bungarus Schlegel, 1837 (=hannah Cantor, 1836) as type-species of the genus Dendraspis Fitzinger, 1843, so that according to the Law of Priority the correct name for the King-Cobra must be Dendraspis hannah (Cantor, 1836).

4. In contrast to the opinion of Brongersma, 1936, who states that the name Dendoasps is to be rejected as the generic name for the ethiopian Mambas (Zool. Mededeel. 19 : 136) we conclude following the Code that Dendraspis Fitzinger, 1843, and Dendoasps Schlegel, 1848, are not homonyms. But it seems inadvisable to replace the name Ophiophagus, a name often used in the meantime for the genus, by Dendraspis Fitzinger; the result would be permanent confusion with Dendoasps (or its invalid emendation Dendoasps Duméril, 1856, in the old sense) not only in zoological but also in applied medical literature. Both the genera concerned even belong to the same family of elapid. Therefore it is proposed to suppress the generic name Dendraspis Fitzinger, 1843,
by use of the Commission’s plenary powers in order to validate *Ophiophagus* Günther, 1864.

5. I therefore ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature:

(1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the generic name *Dendroaspis* Fitzinger, 1843, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;

(2) to place the following generic names on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology:
   (a) *Dendroaspis* Schlegel, 1848 (gender: feminine), type-species, by monotypy, *Elaps jamesonii* Traill, 1843. (The date of publication (cf. Brongersma *l.c.* ) is herewith fixed as 1848);
   (b) *Ophiophagus* Günther, 1864 (gender: masculine), type-species by monotypy, *Hamadryas elaps* Günther, 1858.

(3) to place the following specific names on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology:
   (a) *jamesonii* Traill, 1843, as published in the binomen *Elaps jamesonii* (type-species of *Dendroaspis* Schlegel, 1848);
   (b) *hannah* Cantor, 1836, as published in the binomen *Naja hannah*.

(4) to place the generic name *Dendroaspis* Fitzinger, 1843, suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above, on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology.