



Authors of zoological publications and nomina are signatures, not persons

ALAIN DUBOIS

Vertébrés: Reptiles & Amphibiens, USM 602 Taxonomie & Collections, Département Systématique & Evolution, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, CP 30, 25 rue Cuvier, 75005 Paris, France. E-mail: adubois@mnhn.fr

A few examples

Vigny (1979a–b) described the mating calls and the larval morphologies of 12 species and subspecies of the frog genus *Xenopus* Wagler, 1827. Two years later, the abstract of her thesis dealing with this genus was published (Vigny 1981). In the meanwhile and in the subsequent years, Loumont (1981, 1983, 1984, 1992) described the vocal apparatus of the males of this genus, then two new species of the latter, provided data on its distribution, and published a study of the amphibian fauna of São Tomé and Príncipe. Except for those who had the opportunity to meet her or to hear about her, few zoologists will know that all these papers (and others) were written by the same person, named Catherine Vigny before her marriage, and Catherine Loumont after. However, the fact that this is the same person has no bearing on the references of the papers and on the possibility to find them in a database, a library, the tables of contents of the journals, etc., where they appear under the name by which they were signed: the first ones under Vigny, the second ones under Loumont.

In zoological taxonomy, the same is true, or should be true, for the citation of authors' names in the *nominal-complexes* of scientific names or *nomina*, i.e., the association [nomen + author + date] (Dubois 2000). The nominal-complex "is in fact a shortened, compressed bibliographic reference", the purpose of which is "to help with the search of literature and information" (Dubois 2008: 858), and not "merely to promote the reputation of a scientist or simply an egotistical exercise" (Ng 1994: 509). Actually, for tracing the original reference, mention of the author's name is not as indispensable as believed by many taxonomists, as the date alone could well play the same role (Dubois 2008). However, if the author's name is mentioned after the nomen of the taxon, it is important to quote it exactly as it appears in the original publication, not under a different spelling or a different name applying to the same person. If an author decided to quote the species *Xenopus andrei* Loumont, 1983 under the authorship of "Vigny, 1983", this would create complete confusion and might impede anyone looking for the original publication to find it. Although this idea may appear strange, this is indeed what is done by some authors when they "correct" the name of an author in a nominal-complex because an author has signed different publications under different names.

Let us give some examples of this unusual situation. Zhao & Adler (1993: 276) listed the snake nominal species "*Trimeresurus medoensis* Zhao, 1977", but there exists no such nomen. In the original publication (Djao & Yang 1977: 66, 71), the nomen of this species appeared as "*Trimeresurus medoensis* Djao, sp. nov.", first in the body of the text of the paper printed in Chinese characters, then in the English abstract. Both spellings "Djao" and "Zhao" are different transliterations, in Roman letters, of the same Chinese name, respectively under the Wade-Giles and the Hanyu Pinyin transliteration systems, so they refer exactly to the same person and the same Chinese name. But anyone looking for the year 1977 in a bibliographic database will realize that the spelling "Zhao" did not appear there. As both spellings, although pronounced in the same way, start with different letters, a candid reader may be unable to trace the original reference. In order to allow readers to find it unambiguously, one has to quote a reference under the exact name and spelling that appeared there. Several other similar cases of changed authorship in Chinese amphibians and reptiles are to be found in the book of Zhao & Adler (1993). In amphibians, the work of Frost *et al.* (2006) gives several other examples of "correction" of authorship. For example, this book quotes a work by "Rafinesque (1814)", which does not exist, as the original work was signed "Rafinesque-Schmaltz". The fact that both names designate the same man, who first signed his first works with his complete name (Rafinesque-Schmaltz 1810, 1814a–c) and later (Rafinesque 1815 and subsequent publications) by a shorter one, is of no relevance here: his various papers should be quoted with their original authorship. Whereas in this case Frost *et al.* (2006) gave a shortened author's name, they did the reverse in the case of the work actually signed "Fischer (1813)", which they credited to "Fischer von Waldheim (1813)". This "complete name" of the per-