



The grammatical gender of fish generic nomina based on the stem—*butis* (Teleostei: Perciformes: Gobioidi)

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The word 'name' having various meanings depending on context, in order to avoid confusion and simplify reading I here use the word nomen (plural nomina) to denote 'scientific names'.

Gill & Hoese (2011) discussed the correct formation of family-group nomina based on genus-group nomina ending in *-butis*, and the grammatical gender of these nomina. They have shown that the spelling *Odontobutidae* Hoese & Gill (1993) is correct and that its emendation into *Odontobutididae* by Kottelat (2001; Chen, Kottelat & Wu, 2002) was incorrect. In fact, since these last two papers, the spelling had already been discussed and the error corrected by Kottelat & Freyhof (2007, 2009), who had reached the same conclusion as did Gill & Hoese (2011), viz. *Butis* is not a Greek word but is based on *Cheilodipterus butis* Hamilton, 1822, itself based on a local (Bengali ?) name, as were the vast majority of the species-group nomina created by Hamilton (1822).

Gill & Hoese (2011) also examined the grammatical gender of genus-group nomina formed with the stem *-butis*. They concluded that *Butis* Bleeker, 1856, *Gymnobutis* Bleeker, 1874 and *Prionobutis* Bleeker, 1874 are masculine, whereas *Odontobutis* Bleeker, 1874 and *Neodontobutis* Chen, Kottelat & Wu, 2002 are feminine. In fact, the gender of *Odontobutis* is masculine and their reasons to consider *Gymnobutis* and *Prionobutis* as masculine are inaccurate.

Gill & Hoese (2011) correctly determined that *Gymnobutis*, *Odontobutis* and *Prionobutis* are nomina formed from words neither Latin nor Greek (International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, art. 30.2), that they are not names in an European language using the Latin alphabet (art. 30.2.1) and that the original author (Bleeker, 1874) did not specify their respective grammatical gender (art. 30.2.2). However, the conclusion that their gender is determined under art. 30.2.3 is based on a misunderstanding.

Art. 30.2.3 says that "if no gender was specified, the name takes the gender indicated by its combination with one or more adjectival species-group names of the originally included nominal species". The aim of Bleeker's (1874) article was only to present a new classification of gobies. This included new generic nomina; he did not list all the species included in each of these genera; he only indicated the type species of each new genus; and he only used the nomina in their original combination, not in combination with the new genus nomina. For *Gymnobutis* he designated "*Eleotris gymnocephalus* Steind.", for *Prionobutis* he designated "*Eleotris dasyrhynchus* Günth." and for *Odontobutis* he designated "*Eleotris obscura* Schl." Gill & Hoese (2011) considered that *gymnocephalus* and *dasyrhynchus* are masculine and therefore *Gymnobutis* and *Prionobutis* are masculine, and *obscura* is feminine and therefore *Odontobutis* is feminine.

In fact, art. 30.2.3 determines the gender of the generic nomen not as the gender indicated by the included species, but as the gender indicated by a combination of the new genus nomen and the included species nomina. As Bleeker only listed the type species in their original combinations (all with *Eleotris*) and never in combination with the new generic nomina, this is uninformative under art. 30.2.3 (this means that the feminine gender of *obscura* in *Eleotris obscura* is irrelevant to fix the gender of *Odontobutis*; to be relevant Bleeker should have used the combination *Odontobutis obscura*, which he did not). Therefore, for these three generic nomina, the gender is masculine as ruled by art. 30.2.4.

Gill & Hoese (2011) had considered that *gymnocephalus*, *dasyrhynchus*, *gymnopomus* and *melanostigma* are adjectives and they used them to determine gender under art. 30.2.3. In fact, none of these nomina are adjectives. They all are compound words (art. 31.2.1 and Glossary, p. 112) used in apposition to the generic nomen, all end with a noun, and therefore are indeclinable and remain unchanged whatever the grammatical gender of the generic nomen.

Cephalus is a latinization of the Greek noun κεφαλή for 'head' (*gymnocephalus* means 'naked head'). *Rhynchus* is a latinization of the Greek noun ῥύγχος for 'snout' or 'muzzle' (*dasyrhynchus* means 'hairy snout'). *Pomus* is a latinization of the Greek noun πώμα for 'cover' or 'opercle' (*gymnopomus* means 'naked opercle'). *Stigma* is a Greek noun (στίγμα) meaning 'brand', 'tattoo' or 'mark of a pointed instrument' (*melanostigma* means 'black mark').