



A new genus of gelechiid moths (Lepidoptera, Gelechiidae) from Central Asia

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Abstract

Peltasta, **gen. n.**, is described and illustrated from Central Asia. It is placed provisionally in the tribe Gelechiini near *Athrips* Billberg, 1820 and *Parapsectris* Meyrick, 1911. *Peltasta* comprises three species: *P. zonula* (Gerasimov, 1930), comb. n.; *P. pseudozonula* (Kuznetsov, 1960), comb. n.; and *P. gershensonae* (I. Emelyanov & Piskunov, 1982), comb. n. Keys to the species are given based on external characters and the genitalia of both sexes. Adults and male and female genitalia are illustrated for all species.

Key words: Central Asia, Gelechiidae, Lepidoptera, new genus, *Peltasta*

Introduction

Gelechiidae are worldwide in distribution and represent one of the largest families of Microlepidoptera; numerous species in the family remain to be described. Recently proposed classifications of Gelechiidae (e.g., Hodges 1986, 1998, Kuznetsov & Stekolnikov 2001, Kaila 2004, Ponomarenko 2005) have many areas of incongruence. The absence of convincing diagnoses for subfamilies and tribes leads to problems with the assignment of many genera to the appropriate higher taxon. At the generic and specific levels very few global and relatively few regional revisions exist. This is especially true for small and little known genera from poorly studied geographic regions. Such taxa frequently escape the attention of specialists and hamper regional faunistic studies because the absence of systematic work on them inhibit correct taxonomic identifications and hence, results in mistakes in regional inventories and lists.

During a study on host-plant specialization, biodiversity, and biology of Gelechiidae from the Kyzylkum desert (Uzbekistan), I recognized a significant long-standing problem concerning the gelechiid taxon *Borkhausenia zonula* Gerasimov, 1930. This species was described from a single male from Uzbekistan and placed in Oecophoridae based on external characters. Later, a closely related species, *Borkhausenia pseudozonula* Kuznetsov, 1960, was described from Turkmenistan. In the description of the latter it was noted that based on the genitalia and hindwing venation, both species should be considered a new genus separate from *Borkhausenia* (Kuznetsov 1960: 43), although one was not proposed. Subsequently, these species have been referred to neither Oecophoridae nor Gelechiidae. A recent study of the genitalia of both sexes of *B. zonula* and *B. pseudozonula* clearly shows that both are members of Gelechiidae. Moreover, it is clear that *Brachmia gershensonae* I. Emelyanov & Piskunov, 1982, is also congeneric with them.

Although the male genitalia of this group of species share characters typical of some genera of the tribe Gelechiini, they do not match any existing genus. The female genitalia are very specialized, exhibiting features unique to Gelechiini and Gelechiidae. In view of the specialized combination of genitalia characters, I consider this group of species to be a separate genus, perhaps related to the genus *Athrips* Billberg, 1820. The purpose of this paper is to provide a description of the new genus and brief reviews of the three included species.