

## The Dates of Publication of Amphibian and Reptile Names by Blanford and Stoliczka in the *Journal* and *Proceedings* of the Asiatic Society of Bengal

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**Abstract.-** The dates of publications of the *Proceedings* and the *Journal* of the Asiatic Society of Bengal are discussed. Several names of amphibians and reptiles were proposed, along with brief descriptions, by W. T. Blanford and F. Stoliczka in the monthly *Proceedings* before their intended formal description in the *Journal*, in some cases, a year before. These earlier publications constitute formal descriptions according to the Code of Zoological Nomenclature. A listing of two genera (one amphibian and one reptile) and 24 species (three amphibians and 21 reptiles) is appended; the type localities include Turkmenistan, Pakistan, India, Myanmar and Malaysia.

**Key words.-** Amphibians, reptiles, dates of publication, *Proceedings* and *Journal* of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Founded in 1784 by the Orientalist, Sir William Jones (1746-1794; see Cannon, 1960, for a biographic sketch), the Asiatic Society of Bengal, with its headquarters in Calcutta, has played, according to a report in *Nature* at the turn of the century, "...a leading part in the exploration of the natural history, philology, antiquities, and other branches of scientific inquiry connected with the East" (Anonymous, 1907). Although Jones himself was opposed to the collection of zoological specimens (Bose, 1885), examples of both plants and animals did start to arrive from various parts of the British Indian Empire, and occasionally from outside. Coupled with the expeditions organized or participated in subsequently by the staff of the Museum of the Society, the Asiatic Society of Bengal came to acquire one of the most important zoological reference collections in the world, which, after the passing of the Museum Act in 1866, came to the Indian Museum (Fermor, 1936) and is at present maintained by the Zoological Survey of India (Sewell, 1932; Das et al., 1998).

The periodicals of this two century old institution included the *Journal* and the *Proceedings*, which gradually replaced several leading oriental journals of the period, including the *Asiatick Researches* and the *Calcutta Journal of Natural History*. Because of delays in publishing the *Journal* (started in March 1832, the old series continuing until 1904, see Chaudhuri, 1956), the Society started the *Proceedings* in January 1865 (which were issued monthly till December 1904). The *Proceedings* was out "as soon as possible, after every monthly meeting", according

to the information on the cover page, as opposed to and separate from the more widely circulated *Journal*, which was published only once in two to three months (Mitra, 1885). As mentioned on an untitled page of the first issue, the separation of the *Journal* (which was issued in a "new series" between 1905 and 1934, when the *Proceedings* was reunited with the *Journal*) from the *Proceedings* was "In accordance with the announcement of the Council in the Annual Report read at the Annual General Meeting held on the 11th January, 1865" (Blanford and Heeley, 1865). Each fascicle of the *Proceedings* comprised 10-30 pages, and contained reports of the progress of the Society, including financial statements, additions of books to the library and coins to the Society's numismatic collection, exhibition notices, correspondence from its members and lists (and losses) of members, and also, "short notes, which were not deemed fit for introduction into the *Journal*" (Mitra, 1885).

Because the Society's *Proceedings* was less well known than the *Journal* and the ambiguity of descriptions in abstracts versus in "full papers", the dates of some of the descriptions of several genera and species of amphibians and reptiles from Asia have been assigned incorrectly in subsequent works (e.g., Smith, 1935; 1943) to the description published in the *Journal*, when, in fact, they were validly published earlier, in some cases, a year before, in the *Proceedings*. Some of the leading naturalists of the day read papers on faunistics, including the descriptions of new taxa, in the monthly meetings of the Society, which were reported as "abstracts" in the *Proceedings*. These