



A name too far!

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This is a review of "Taxonomic review of the *Conus spectrum*, *Conus stramineus* and *Conus collisus* complexes (Gastropoda – Conidae) – Part I" by R. M. (Mike) Filmer, published in *Visaya* 3(2): 23–85, dated July, 2011. Our original intent was to point out the introduction of a *nomen novum* that we consider to be unnecessary. After studying the paper we found other items that would, hopefully, have not appeared had the paper undergone a review. Unfortunately *Visaya* is not a peer-reviewed journal, although we are aware that some authors send their papers off to associates for comments before they are submitted to *Visaya*. The first item addressed will be the *nomen novum* and comments on other items will then follow in order of appearance in the paper.

A *nomen novum* was introduced by Filmer (2011: 31, 33) to replace *Conus lacteus* Lamarck, 1810 non *Cucullus lacteus* Röding, 1798 [listed as *Conus lacteus* (Röding, 1798) by Filmer].

The nominal species *Cucullus lacteus* Röding, 1798 has not, since its inception, been used in a taxonomic work as a valid species. It has long been known to be a senior secondary homonym of *Conus lacteus* Lamarck, 1810 when both are placed in the genus *Conus*. However, Röding's name has never been used as valid. *Conus lacteus*

Lamarck has been sparsely used itself as a valid name. The genus *Conus* has long been broken up with new genera created for various distinct groups. Current work on the family Conidae has resulted in even more genera being introduced. This was known to the author as he stated that:

"The recent publication by Tucker & Tenorio (2009), proposing the re-classification of the genus *Conus* into a number of new genera, has not been applied in this study but mention is made of its effect, where appropriate, for those wishing to implement it."

and

"Röding in 1798 introduced the genus *Cucullus* in place of the genus *Conus*. Due to Tucker & Tenorio (2009) *Cucullus* is a junior synonym of *Conus*. This [*sic*; = Thus] in this work all Röding's names appear in parenthesis as (Röding) to conform to the rules of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN) 4th edition." – Filmer 2011: 24

To state that Tucker & Tenorio were in some way responsible for this synonymy of *Cucullus* with *Conus* is disingenuous as the synonymy has been known since Röding's names first came into acceptance. *Cucullus* was never used as a valid name. Secondary homonymy sometimes occurs as *Cucullus*

and *Conus* have the same type species and nothing in the work of Tucker & Tenorio had any effect on that relationship.

The generation of numerous genera for species long placed in *Conus* is not new, just expanded as our knowledge of them has increased. Even a century and a half ago various genera were employed, even by scientific dealers such as the Hamburg firm Museum Godeffroy. In their 1869 Catalog (Schmeltz, 1869) are listed species of *Conus* using five subgenera in addition to the nominotypical genus, and also the full genera *Cylinder*, *Nubecula*, *Hermes*, *Dendroconus* (with one subgenus), and *Leptoconus* (with two subgenera) Why some modern workers do not recognize these genera is not known, especially as such subdivision gives much information about feeding habits which in turn adds to their usefulness in biodiversity studies. Certainly various genera in Conidae have long been utilized by many authors.

Filmer justified the introduction of a replacement name for *Conus lacteus* Lamarck with the statement:

“However as *C. lacteus* Lamarck is a homonym of *C. lacteus* (Röding, 1798) (based on the assumption that *Cucullus* is a synonym of *Conus*, see introduction) it requires a new name (nomen novum).” – Filmer 2011: 33

We will not discuss the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* except to comment that although it has little specific comment about secondary homonymy, it does have a lot to say about stability and prevailing usage. The two names in question are not congeneric unless both are forced into the genus *Conus*.

In any modern classification, *Conus lacteus* Lamarck would become *Asprella lacteus* (Lamarck) and could not be a homonym of Röding’s taxon which, if placed in use, would be *Dendroconus lacteus* (Röding). To reiterate, it is our considered opinion that the

replacement name *Conus purissimus* Filmer, 2011 is a *nomen vanum* and the applicable name for the taxon is *Asprella lacteus* (Lamarck, 1810) if it is considered to be a valid species. There is the possibility that it may belong to the morphologically similar genus *Phasmoconus*, but it cannot be a *Dendroconus*. To make it clearer, the name *Conus purissimus* cannot be used by anyone who places *Conus lacteus* Lamarck and *Cucullus lacteus* Röding in different genera (ICZN Article 59.2).

Page 23. There is inconsistency in the way authors and dates are treated as an unconventional form, “*C. chinensis* (Röding), 1798”, is used for various nomina.

Page 23. This paper is stated to be Part I in a series of three parts. The Abstract contains data for all three parts. In Part II we may expect the new species *Conus moolenbee - ki* and in Part III *Conus balbacensis* is to appear. These two names appear again in the General Introduction but are not to be found elsewhere in the paper. There is no prohibition in the Code against introducing *nomina nuda* but there is no good reason for doing so unless the author is so misguided as to think that introducing these names here gives him some sort of ownership of them. If and when these names are validated, all future chresonymies of them will have to begin with extra lines showing the usage of these *nomina nuda*.

The “when” in the last sentence above was used purposely as this journal, *Visaya*, is issued “on an irregular basis as manuscripts become available.” Since its inception in 2004 *Visaya* has averaged just fewer than two issues per year. Given its cost (this issue is ?36 [approximately = US\$51] plus postage from overseas) it is unlikely that there will be a spate of issues in the near future. This delay, of unknown duration, has a negative effect on the value of the paper. One of the good points of this paper is that page references are given for many citations in the text,

making them easy to find in the respective references. However, there is no References Cited as Mr. Filmer advises (page 56) that "Acronyms and Bibliography will be given at the end of Part III of this series on *Conus*." It is thus quite possible that one may have to wait until 2013 to look up something mentioned in this paper if it is in an unfamiliar reference. No justification for this lack comes to mind.

While this paper was in preparation the succeeding issue of *Visaya* appeared. Although dated "August 2011" it was issued on 21 September 2011. Nowhere therein is there mention of Filmer's Parts II and III. It is notable that this issue contains two papers on Conidae in which the species are placed in the genera *Virgiconus*, *Calamiconus*, *Dauciconus*, *Purpuriconus*, *Gradiconus*, *Jaspidiconus* and *Lindaconus*. The genus *Conus* is used for only one species and its subspecies.

Page 24. After dismissing the work of Tucker & Tenorio, Filmer states that "no doubt future work on the animal, its radula and especially the study of DNA may well result in different conclusions...." Ignored is the fact that the arrangement of Tucker & Tenorio is based primarily on radula characters and derived using cladistic methods, with all other known characters also considered. In the Foreword to Tucker & Tenorio's book, Antonio Monteiro presciently wrote "I am sure that amateur collectors will have rather a hard time adapting to the classification."

Page 24. Under Methodology appears the statement:

"As there is some doubt as to whether the names published in the *Conchological Illustrations* (1833–1841), (Conch. Ill.) were named by G. B. Sowerby I or his son G. B. Sowerby II or by both together this author attributes them to both as "Sowerby I & II". – Filmer (2011: 24) [punctuation as pub-

lished]

As pointed out by Petit (2009: 21), this problem is easily solved by reading the introductory matter to the *Conchological Illustrations* where authorship is determined. All *Conus* species dating from the *Conchological Illustrations* are attributable to G. B. Sowerby I.

Page 26. There is a reference to "Shikama (1963–64, p. 119, fig. 80)." Unless by some strange coincidence there is another work with the referenced species on the same page and plate, this is a reference to Shikama & Horikoshi, *Selected shells of the world illustrated in colours*, published 15 December 1963. Such uncertainties underscore the need for comprehensive references in each part.

Page 29. Figured on page 29 are the Chemnitz figures which represent *Conus chinensis* (Röding, 1798). They are, unfortunately, taken from a poorly colored copy of Chemnitz. Filmer cannot be faulted for this, as few people have the luxury of referring to more than one copy, but in this instance his photographs can be compared with a copy at hand. Filmer states that "The possibility exists that this is a specimen not in the genus *Conus*." As already shown, Filmer declined using the latest classification available and states that he is placing all species in *Conus*. Therefore this statement indicates that he is of the opinion that Röding's figure does not represent a species of *Conus sensu lato*.

Filmer's treatment of genera is confusing. As already mentioned he did not use any genus other than *Conus*, choosing to ignore the recent work of Tucker & Tenorio, as well as that of many others who divided the Linnaean *Conus*. On page 25 he states that "four of the species named herein fall into the **new genus** *Asprella* Schaufuss, 1869" and "Tucker & Tenorio also list a considerable number of other species under **their genus** *Asprella*..." On the next page it is stated that *Conus spectrum* was placed in the **new genus** *Asprella* by Tucker & Tenorio

(209, p. 83) [emphasis supplied]. Not only is *Asprella* not a “new” genus as is obvious from its date of 1869, but it has been in general usage for many years. The “methodology” permitting this “new” genus to be attributed to Tucker & Tenorio is unfortunately symptomatic.

Page 32. Here and elsewhere in this paper reference is made to synonymies listed by Trew (1982). These have been determined to be references to the *Conus* part of the *Handlists of the Melvill-Tomlin Collections*. Inappropriate citation of these lists was recently addressed:

“During the period 1981–1996 the National Museum of Wales published a series of lists of the contents of the conchological collections of J. C. Melvill and J. R. le B. Tomlin. In the introduction to the first part Dr. Graham Oliver stated that the *Handlist* series had been designed for the purpose of disseminating information on the contents of these two collections. He further clearly stated that “information contained in the *Handlists* should not be quoted without reference to the specimens as the identifications have not been checked and remain those of Melvill and Tomlin.” This introductory caveat was also in later issues. In short, they are lists of the collections using the names on the specimen labels; some are not even dated. Unfortunately some later authors did not read the introductory material. In recent years the names in these *Handlists* have been picked up and placed in various lists being compiled on the web. Fortunately it appears that the incorrect attributions and *nomina nuda* in the *Handlists* have not, as yet, been transferred from those sites to a print medium. For that reason, and in view of Dr. Oliver’s introduction, the *Handlists* are not cited herein.” – Petit (2009: 58)

In briefer terms, the “synonymies” in Trew

are simply copied from labels in the Museum collection and are meaningless without seeing the specimens that the labels accompany.

Page 33. Filmer states: “This author does not agree with other authors that *C. lacteus* is a synonym, color form of *C. spectrum* but is convinced that it is a valid taxon differing significantly from *C. spectrum* by the characteristics mentioned above.” Readers are not told when or why Filmer changed his opinion as in 2001 (pages 157–158) he stated that *C. lacteus* Lamarck is “a synonym (colour form) of *C. spectrum* Linnaeus, 1758.” The reason for this reversal, other than the opportunity to manufacture a new name, would certainly be of interest.

Pages 37–38. About *C. conspersus* it is stated that “Tucker & Tenorio (2009, p. 83) place it in the genus *Asprella* and rename it *C. conspersa*, to conform with the generic name.” This is our first experience with a mandatory change in gender (Article 31.2) being considered renaming.

Page 42. In this paper, as with so many of its type, no distinction is made between taxonomic works and lists of taxa. Throughout the paper Wagner & Abbott (1978) is treated as a taxonomic work although it contains no original data. As stated by the authors in their Preface, it “is not a scientific text-book ... nor an identification manual. It is a Catalogue of the marine mollusks.” Filmer (page 43) cites it as giving the location for *Conus pica* Adams & Reeve as Borneo. That is simply the original locality as already shown by Filmer (page 42). The point is that the interjection of Wagner & Abbott into the discussion is simply “window-dressing” as it adds nothing and implies additional data when it is simply copy work. Filmer figures three syntypes and three varieties for *Conus pica*. Not mentioned is whether or not additional syntypes are extant. Adams & Reeve figured dorsal and ventral views of two specimens but did not state how many were collected. Their Figures

10c–d are of the shell in Filmer's Figure 15, the plate and photographs matching exactly. Adams & Reeve's Figures 10a–b, a specimen which has only two slight touches of color, is not mentioned by Filmer but it may be the shell shown as a variety in Figure 18 oriented in a different manner with the marking barely showing. All Adams and Reeve specimens are syntypes and cannot be relegated to "variety" status until a lectotype is designed, should such be necessary.

In summary, this paper will be of interest to cone collectors as it contains 29 full page color plates of shells in addition to numerous text figures, including some type specimens. Most of the synonyms listed have long been known as such, but some are new such as the placement of *Conus petergabrielii* Lorenz, 2006 as a synonym of *Conus dolium* Boivin, 1864 which in turn is listed as a color form of *Conus pica* Adams & Reeve, 1848.

In conclusion, we make the following observations. Proposals such as replacing a little used junior secondary homonym without reference to modern taxonomy should be avoided regardless of technical correctness. We will continue, therefore, to use the combination *Asprella lacteus* (Lamarck) or, should it turn out that the type specimen actually is an *Phasmoconus*, then *Phasmoconus lacteus* (Lamarck). There is zero probability that it is a *Dendroconus*. The generic identity can only be determined by examining the radula of specimens when they become available. Second, it should go without saying that publication in outlets that are not peer-reviewed carries risk. It may seem that avoiding peer review makes things seem easier, but it puts an extra burden on would-be authors. In such publications there just is no one to help catch the mistakes or challenge the science. It then becomes the author's responsibility to be even more careful.

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NOTE

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