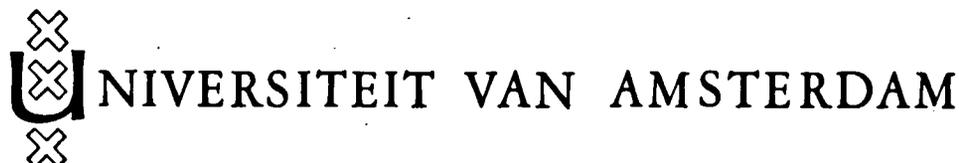


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## ON THE CORRECT LATIN NAME OF THE INDUS SUSU

(CETACEA, PLATANISTOIDEA) \*

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### ABSTRACT

*Platanista indi* Blyth, 1859, is a junior synonym of *Platanista minor* Owen, 1853. The latter name is therefore the correct latin name for the Indus Susu. The original diagnosis of *minor* by Sir Richard Owen (1853: 448-449) is republished.

In 1971 (a, b), Pilleri & Gühr rediscovered and redescribed the distinct taxonomic status of the dolphins living in the Indus river system as compared to those occurring in the Ganges/Brahmaputra systems, *Platanista gangetica* (Roxburgh, 1801). Though closely related, the authors accorded a specific status to the animals from Pakistan and they used for them the latin name *Platanista indi*

Blyth, 1859. This name has been accepted by subsequent authors, e.g. in the "Report of the meeting on smaller cetaceans" (Mitchell ed., 1975).

It is only of academic interest that Kasuya (1972) attached merely a subspecific rank to the dolphin population from the Indus river and its tributaries. By doing so he also recognized the differences between the two populations and their distinct taxonomic status.

More important, however, is that Pilleri & Gühr (1971 a, b), Kasuya (1972) and others (including the present author) overlooked that *Platanista indi* Blyth, 1859, is a junior subjective synonym of *Platanista minor* Owen, 1853, in spite of the fact that both trivial names, with their correct authors and dates of publication, were listed in the "Catalog of living whales" by Hershkovitz (1966: 14). Both specific names were considered junior synonyms of *gangetica* until the publications of Pilleri & Gühr in 1971. Therefore stabil-

\* In a slightly different version this note has been presented as a working paper at the meeting of the Sub-committee on Smaller Cetaceans of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission, London, 7-9 June 1976.

ity of nomenclature in the meaning of the recent version of article 23 of the "International code of zoological nomenclature" is virtually not affected by a formal application of the law of priority, and there is no nomenclatural reason whatsoever to revive the younger name *indi* as the valid name of the taxon. If a distinct specific status is to be accorded to the dolphins of the genus *Platanista* Wagler, 1830, living in the Indus river system, then the name *minor* Owen, 1853, has to be applied.

As the publication by Sir Richard Owen (1853) in which *minor* is described is very rare, it may be useful to give a complete citation of the diagnosis (: 448-449):

Genus *Platanista*

2481. The skull [\*] of a long and slender-jawed Dolphin from the Indus (*Platanista gangetica*, var. *minor*).

It shows all the characteristics that have been pointed out by Baron Cuvier (Ossemens Fossiles, tom. v. pl. 1 4to, pp 279, 299) and Prof. Eschricht (Annals and Mag. of Nat. Hist. 1852, vol. ix. pp 161 & 279), but is of smaller size, the total length not exceeding twelve inches, and the anterior teeth being much longer, and more slender and acute. These differences may depend on the immaturity of the individual, but all the parts of the occiput have coalesced, and not any of the sutural unions manifest any mark of immaturity. There are twenty-one teeth on the left side of the upper jaw and nineteen teeth on the right side; but the alveolar grooves extend further back, indicating the former existence of teeth or germs of teeth which have been lost. There are twenty-six teeth on each side of the lower jaw, behind which is a short extent of an empty alveolar groove. The teeth in place are close together: the anterior ones in the lower jaw are an inch in length, slender, and sharp-pointed, with the points slightly incurved, and projecting outside those of the upper jaw: but the chief part of the crowns of both the upper and under teeth fit into the interspaces of those of the opposite jaw, when the mouth is closed. The teeth progressively diminish in length, without decrease of basal breadth, as they are placed further back. A portion of the right tympanic bulla has been removed to expose its cavity and part of the petrosal within. In the length of the mandibular symphysis the *Platanista* resembles the *Physeter*: in the broad, converging, maxillary crests it resembles the *Hyperoodon*: in the expanse of the temporal fossae, the strength of the zygomatic arches, the shortness of the molars and the smallness of the orbits, it is peculiar among the true Cetacea.

Presented by David Wallich, M.D.

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[\*] This skull was destroyed during World War II.