PROTOGONIA SUBQUADRATA COPE, 1881 (MAMMALIA):
PROPOSED SUPPRESSION OF GENERIC AND SPECIFIC NAMES
UNDER THE PLENARY POWERS.  Z.N.(S.) 1890

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The object of the present application is to ask the International Commission
on Zoological Nomenclature to use its plenary powers to suppress a virtual
nomen oblitum, which, so long as it remains an available name, represents a
potential threat to the stability of the nomenclature of an important group of
early mammals. The names concerned are Protogonia Cope, 1881 (Proc.
Amer. philos. Soc., 19: 492) and subquadrata (ibid.), published in conjunction
with the foregoing generic name.

2. In 1881 Cope (Proc. Amer. philos. Soc., 19: 492) described Protogonia,
type-species Protogonia subquadrata, a condylarthran mammal from the middle
Paleocene of New Mexico. On the same page he established the species
Phenacodus puercensis. In 1888 (Trans. Amer. philos. Soc., 16: 359) he referred
the type specimen of Protogonia subquadrata (now No. 3876 in the American
Museum of Natural History Cope Collection) to the species puercensis which
he transferred from Phenacodus to Protogonia. In 1892 Scott (Proc. Acad.
at. Sci. Philad., 44: 299) named the genus Tetraclaenodon, type-species
Mioclaenus floreianus Cope, 1888, but did not recognize any relationships
between it and Cope's Protogonia. In 1893 Cope decided that Protogonia was
preoccupied by Protagonius Huebner, 1819 (Verz. bekannt. Schmett., 7: 100)
a lepidopteran, and therefore proposed the substitute name Euprotogonia
Amer. Mus. nat. Hist., 9: 303-305) synonymized (correctly, in the opinion of
all subsequent authors) Tetraclaenodon floreianus with Cope's Euprotogonia
puercensis, but continued to use the generic name Euprotogonia even though he
recognized that Tetraclaenodon Scott, 1892, had priority. He formally
acknowledged this error on his part in 1937 (Trans. Amer. philos. Soc., 30: 188).

3. Under Article (56a) the one-letter difference between Protagonius
Huebner, 1819, and Protogonia Cope, 1881, does not invalidate the latter name
as a junior homonym. The erection of Euprotogonia Cope in Earle, 1893, as an
objective junior synonym of Protogonia Cope, 1881, was therefore unnecessary.

4. Although all subsequent authors have accepted Matthew's (1897)
synonymizing of Euprotogonia puercensis and Tetraclaenodon floreianus,
several (including Osborn, 1898, Bull. Amer. Mus. nat. Hist., 10: 159-164;
Douglas, 1908, Ann. Carnegie Mus., 5: 11-26; and Gidley, manuscript cited
use the generic name Euprotogonia rather than Protogonia or Tetraclaenodon.
No author in the primary literature (except Cabrera, 1935, vide infra) has used
the name Protogonia since 1893.

5. Since the second decade of the 20th century, majority usage has favoured
the name Tetaclaenodon, following Scott, 1892. Pertinent publications are:

Matthew, 1937, Trans. Amer. philos. Soc. 30 : 1-510
Gazin, 1956, Smithsonian Inst. misc. Coll. 131 (6) : 1-57
Dorr, 1958, Bull. geol. Soc. Amer. 69 : 1217-1244
Radinsky, 1966, Evolution, 20 : 408-417

The most influential classifications also use Tetaclaenodon:

Lavocat, 1955, Traité de Zoologie, 17 (1) : 462
Lavocat, 1958, Traité de Paleontologie 6 (2) : 6
Romer, 1966, Vertebrate Paleontology : 385

5. The nomenclatural problem involving Protagonia, Tetaclaenodon and Euprotogonia was explicitly recognized by Cabrera (1935, Rev. Fac. Agron. Vet. Univ. Buenos Aires 8 : 17) and Simpson (1937, Bull. U.S. nat. Mus. No. 169 : 246) who proposed radically different solutions. Cabrera supported the legal priority of Protagonia: “De acuerdo con las reglas de nomenclatura vigentes, Protagonia Cope, 1881, no queda invalida por Protogonius Hübner, y por tanto no hay ningún motivo para substituir dicho nombre por Euprotogonia Cope, 1893, o Tetaclaenodon Scott, 1892.” Simpson, on the other hand, after reviewing the circumstances stated above, concluded: “Without taking a decisive stand, I shall tentatively continue to use Tetaclaenodon, which has the cardinal virtue of being generally understood and of being unambiguous. Euprotogonia is certainly invalid, and Protagonia is of dubious validity, is ambiguous, and is unfamiliar to present-day students.” Simpson’s solution is certainly that favoured and followed by all current students of early mammals.

6. We therefore request the Commission:

(1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the generic name Protagonia Cope, 1881, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;
(2) to place the generic name Protagonia Cope, 1881 (as suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above) on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology;
(3) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name subquadrata Cope, 1881, as published in the binomen Protagonia subquadrata, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;
(4) to place the specific name subquadrata Cope, 1881 (as suppressed under the plenary powers in (3) above) on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology;
(5) to place the generic name Tetaclaenodon Scott, 1892 (gender: masculine),
type-species *Mioclaenus floverianus* Cope, 1888, on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology;
(6) to place the specific name *puercensis* Cope, 1881, as published in the binomen *Phenacodus puercensis*, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology.